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CATECHETICAL CONFERENCES ON PENANCE,

As a Virtue and as a Sacrament;

ON

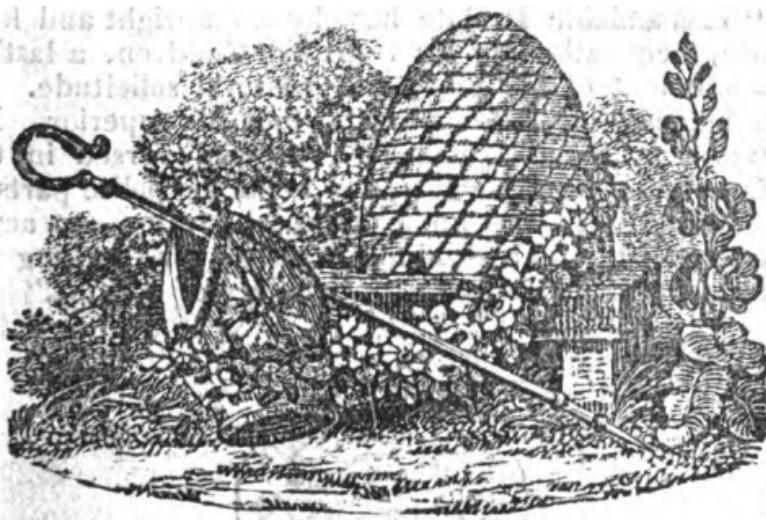
The advantages of frequent Confession—Jubilees and Indulgences—Mortification and Self-Denial—the Exercise of the Presence of God—Conformity to the Will of God, and on Perseverance.

BY

**THE RIGHT REV. DR. JAMES LANIGAN,
R. C. BISHOP OF OSSORY,**

Who died in the City of Kilkenny, in the Year 1811.

ENTERED AT STATIONERS' HALL.



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To the General Society of the Christian Doctrine.

1833

The following paragraph has been taken from a public journal, conducted by a Protestant Gentleman, in the city of Kilkenny, at the time that this venerable Prelate died :—

“ Died, at his house in Kilkenny, on Tuesday, the
“ 10th instant, in the 75th year of his age, the Right
“ Rev. Dr. JAMES LANIGAN, Titular Bishop of Ossory,
“ who governed this diocese for upwards of 20 years.

“ This amiable Prelate has, by an upright and holy
“ life, bequeathed to his Spiritual Children, a lasting
“ monument of his piety and pastoral solicitude. In
“ Science he has not left behind him his superior. He
“ was a profound Humanist—was well versed in the
“ Greek and Roman Poets, and in all the polite parts of
“ learning. He was an Apostolical Orator—an acute
“ Schoolman, and a Profound Philosopher—uniting the
“ sagacity of a Prophet with the piety of a Saint.”



ON PENANCE.

What is meant by penance?

Penance, in general, may signify the sorrow we have for having done any thing, whether that thing be good or bad ; but to speak strictly, and according to the language of the Catholic Church, by penance is meant the interior sorrow for having offended God by sin, and the punishment we inflict on ourselves, in order to avenge God's justice for having sinned.

The sectaries who differ from the Catholic Church, pretend, contrary to Scripture, and to all antiquity, that penance means no more than to change a person's life for the better ; and consequently, that it is not necessary to have sorrow for our sins, or to punish ourselves for having sinned. How contrary this opinion is to Scripture and antiquity, any person conversant with either can easily perceive.

Our Saviour, in the 10th chap. St. Luke, tells the Jews, " That if the wonders wrought among them were wrought in Tyre and Sidon, the Tyrians and Sidonians would long ago have done penance in sackcloth and ashes." St. Paul, in 7th chap. 2d. Ep. to the Corinthians, declares, " That a sorrow according to God operates penance for salvation." It is plain that St. Paul in this text understands by penance a sorrow of heart afflicted for sin. Joel, chap. 2, " Turn to me with your whole heart, says the Lord, in

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fasting, in weeping and mourning." And Eze-
chiel, chap. 6, "They were displeased with them-
selves for the evil they had done, in all their
abominations." From those texts it is evident
that to do penance it is not sufficient barely to
change our lives for the better; but it is also
necessary to be sorry for our sins, and to punish
ourselves for having committed them. Tertul-
lian declares, "That to do penance we must
"have a sincere sorrow for having sinned, and
"must unite with this sorrow, mortifications,
"prayers, watching, fasting, alms deeds, tears,
"and humiliations."

St. Augustine says, that to do penance, "It is
"not sufficient merely to reform our lives and
"amend our conduct, but we must also have our
"hearts penetrated with a lively grief, and satisfy
"God by our contrition, alms, and prayers, in
"order that he may pardon us our sins,"

*What is penance, considered as a virtue and
considered as a sacrament?*

Penance, considered as a virtue, prompts us
to turn ourselves to God, to be sorry for our
sins, to detest them, to resolve to commit them
no more, and to punish ourselves for them, in
order to satisfy God, whom we have offended
by sin: if we add to these, confession to a priest
and the absolution, we have then the sacrament
of penance.

Hence we ought to remark, first—That pena-
nce is certainly a virtue, for it is frequently
commanded by God, both in the Old and New
Testaments.

Secondly—That penance is a moral virtue
which we can never acquire by our own natural

strength, but must be communicated to us by God. Jeremiah says, "Convert me, O Lord; and I will be converted;" and the Council of Trent declares, "That without grace and the assistance of the Holy Ghost, no one can repent as he ought in order to obtain the grace of justification.

Was penance always necessary?

Penance was at all times necessary to obtain the remission of mortal sin; the reason is, that man, by sin, indulges himself in some unlawful and forbidden gratification, and offends thereby his God. This offence obliges God to withdraw his grace from sinning man, and to punish him in this life and in the next; for the justice of God will not permit him to suffer with impunity any inordinate or vicious act. Hence a man must expiate by a true sorrow, the pleasure he enjoyed in sinning; and as he gratified his own will when he acted contrary to God's commands, he must now afflict that will by true contrition, if he has a mind to be reconciled to God, and to avoid the punishment justly incurred by sin.

Let us open the sacred book, and we will find in numberless places the necessity of penance recommended and inculcated. In the Old Testament, Eccle. tells us. "That if we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the living God."

Ezechiel cried out to us, "Be converted and do penance for all your sins, and your sins will be no longer the cause of your ruin."

And it is not only in the old law, that penance was preached to sinning man, we find it more rigorously insisted on, in the new, than in the old law. St. John the Baptist, the herald of the new law, recommends most earnestly to the Jews,

"to bring forth worthy fruits of penance." Our Saviour tells the Jews, in St. Luke, "That unless they do penance they shall all perish."

St. Peter obliged all who came to be baptized to do penance. St. Paul also preached the same at Athens. In a word, if we cast our eyes on the history of religion from the beginning of the world to this time, we shall find a long and venerable series of the preachers of penance, constantly succeeding each other throughout all ages.

Noah was the first preacher of penance, to all flesh that had corrupted its way.

Moses recommends to a great sinner to do penance for his sins.

The prophets were constantly crying out to the people of their times, to do penance for their sins. Among those prophets, the principal were, Jeremy, Ezechiel, Osias, Joel, Jonas, and Zachary.

St. John the Baptist, the precursor of the Messias and the herald of the new law, preached the same doctrine, and proclaimed aloud to mankind, that they should do penance.

Our Saviour himself sanctioned the same doctrine by his own example and authority; and his first sermon to the people, breathed nothing else but the spirit of penance. From his mouth the same divine precept of penance, passed to the mouths of his apostles. As soon as they received their mission, they went through the world, preaching to all mankind to do penance for their sins. When the first person converted by St. Peter, asked him what they should do, his answer was, "that they should do penance for their sins."

St. Paul courageously preached the same

doctrine before King Agrippa and the Senate of Athens.

St. John Evangelist, writing to the Churches of Asia, exhorted them likewise to do penance.

From these times to ours, this precept of doing penance is the common and invariable precept of all the Councils, of all the Doctors, of all the pulpits of the Catholic Church: hence, I can conclude with justice, that the law of penance is a fundamental law of religion, and equally binding on all mankind, without exception or reserve, according to their respective crimes and abilities.

Is it advisable to defer doing penance till another time, or till the hour of our death?

It is highly improper and irrational to defer, even for one day, doing penance for any sin or sins of which we may be guilty. After the commission of a sin, it is not always necessary to go immediately to the confessional about it; but it is always necessary, when we reflect that we have sinned, that we should be sorry for our sins and detest them, and to turn to God for pardon. For, as St. Gregory says, "He who has promised pardon to the repenting sinner, did not promise him to-morrow to repent." If a sinner then defer his repentance, God will not always defer to make this sinner feel all the effects of his anger. For, as Ecclesiastes says, "It will burst on him all at once like a sudden storm." When a man delays repenting, because he relies on God's mercy, he must justly be considered as enkindling the wrath of God still more against him, by abusing and perverting his mercy, and by making it a means or pretext of continuing to offend God; for nothing displeases God so

much as sin; he is its utter and irreconcileable enemy. Hence, a perseverance in sin displeases him infinitely. As St. John Chrysostom remarks, " To sin, is not so great an evil as to persevere in sinning. To sin is an unhappy consequence flowing from the frailty of man, and the corruption of human nature; but a perseverance in sin is truly diabolical, and merits the fatal punishment inflicted on devils,"

It seems from what has been said, that it is not proper to defer repentance till sickness comes on, or till death approaches ?

To defer repentance until we are sick, until we grow old, or until we are dying, not only shews an imprudence and rashness bordering on madness, but shews also a blindness and infatuation in man, which can never be too much lamented; for where is there a man in the world who can be sure that he shall live to be old; that he shall not be surprised by a sudden death, or by a sudden and heavy fit of sickness, which is justly deemed to be nearly the same in effect as a sudden death. Do not we very frequently see people snatched away by death, who did not expect themselves, nor did any one else think, they would die so soon? We should ever have before our eyes the solemn warning given us by our Saviour, and watch in consequence, lest we should be surprised by death. We should never hold out to ourselves or others that absurd and impious saying, that we shall have time enough for our conversion: for it is an incontestable truth, confirmed by the experience of mankind in all ages, that numberless sinners have been surprised by a sudden death, and that every one is exposed to

the same fatal danger and misfortune. This reasoning cannot be weakened by an observation commonly made, that several sinners have lived to be old, and then repented. I cannot deny but several sinners have lived to be old. As to their repentance, I shall examine that hereafter. But what consequence can any individual draw here, which could justly encourage him to persevere in his sinful state? Many sinners have lived to be old and repented; therefore God will grant me the same favour. Does not the absurdity of such a consequence strike every one at first sight? If he reasoned justly, he would reason as follows:— I have sinned; I must therefore repent, or I shall lose Heaven, and be damned. But when shall I repent? Shall I defer it till I am old? Methinks that would not be wise; for I can have no certainty at all, that I shall live to be old. There is question of my eternal salvation or damnation, a matter of all matters in the world, of the greatest importance to me. Shall I then risk a matter of the greatest importance in the world to me, on hopes as uncertain as any uncertain hopes can be, especially when I can secure this important matter by sure means, and means in my power?

You have said that a death-bed repentance is uncertain; explain how it is uncertain?

I say again, that a death-bed repentance is ordinarily insufficient, or entirely false. This is the opinion of the Holy Fathers.

St. Cyprian was persuaded of this. He says, that it is not a true and sincere sorrow for their sins, that urge people to repent at the hour of death, but merely the fear of death and its consequences.

Amboise de Poitou en son force
Bell p 103.

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ON PENANCE.

1 St. Ambrose: With regard to him who, in danger of death, calls for the Sacrament, receives it, and then dies, I admit that we do not refuse him the Sacraments, but I will not affirm that he dies well. I do not presume it—I do not say it—I do not assure it; for I have no mind to deceive any one. It is evident, that he who repents not till he can sin no longer, does not quit sin, but sin quits him.

2 St. Augustine and Salvien repeat nearly the same words. A sinner who defers repentance till the hour of his death is dreadfully threatened in the 1st chap. of Proverbs. God says to him, "Because you have despised all my counsels, and neglected all my reprimands, I will laugh at you, on your death-bed, and insult you, when, what you fear will happen to you."

I would by no means wish to insinuate hereby that any sinner should despair of pardon at the hour of his death, if he did not repent before.— Such despair would be the greatest of all his crimes, would dreadfully aggravate his damnation, and preclude every possible chance of salvation. His only refuge then is, to endeavour to excite in himself the most perfect contrition for his sins, to place great confidence in Jesus Christ, and hope to be saved by his merits, as the penitent thief was on the Cross.

It appears from what you have said, that no one can wisely defer doing penance for his sins till old age or death; but how long should a person defer doing penance for his sins?

I answer, first—That no one should defer any considerable length of time doing penance for his sins; because, according to the Council of Trent,

Session 14, The entire life of a Christian ought to be a life of penance: that is, we should be sorry during our whole lives for our sins, and detest them sincerely, though we had been absolved from them in the tribunal of confession. We should be in the constant habit of this—we should do nothing contrary to this habit, and be always resolved to detest them, whenever they occur to our memory. Though we confessed our sins sincerely, and received absolution from the Priest, we can never be entirely certain, that we brought to confession all the dispositions required, in order to obtain the grace of the Sacrament; and even though we were assured from Heaven, as David was, that our sins were forgiven us, we should never cease, like him, to be sorry for them, nor give over begging of the Lord, that he would wash us still more from our sins, and cleanse us still more from our iniquities. We should be endeavouring our whole lives to tend to God, as our last end and sovereign happiness. Now, sin is the principal and only obstacle that prevents us from seeing and enjoying God; consequently, we should be sorry our whole life time, for having committed any sin that separated us from God.

Secondly—Two other reasons should prompt us never to cease, during the course of our lives, doing penance for our sins. The first is, the frailty of human nature, which renders us liable to relapse into sin, after having been reconciled to God. As St. Paul says, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, “He that thinks that he stands, let him take care, that he do not fall.” Now there is nothing whatsoever that can so effectually prevent a re-

lapse into sin, as to lead constantly a penitential life.

The second reason is, that we can never be entirely certain that we have completely satisfied the justice of God, which we have wounded by sin ; for, though sin as to its guilt may have been remitted in the sacrament of penance, yet there ever remains some satisfaction to be performed for it to the justice of God. Hence, St. Augustine declares, "That the penance a person asks for in sickness must be feeble and weak ; because the words alone of a penitent are not sufficient to cleanse him from his sins." The satisfaction to be done for great sins, does not require words so much as works. How then can a person do penance properly, who can perform no satisfactory works.

Is penance a Sacrament ?

Most certainly, as can be easily demonstrated from Scripture, and the universal and constant tradition of the Catholic Church.

Matthew, 18 chap. "Whatever ye bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, and whatever ye loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

John 20. "Whose sins ye remit shall be remitted, and whose sins ye shall retain are retained."

Now a Sacrament is a visible sign permanently instituted by Christ, and productive of grace. All these requisites are to be found in penance ; for where there is on one side a declaration of sin, united with external grief, and on the other side the external sentence of a judge loosing and binding, there certainly must be found a visible sign. But all these are found in penance ; and consequently it is a visible sign.

Secondly—It is plain that this sign is pro-

ductive of grace; for by penance a sinner, from being an enemy becomes a friend of God, and is released from all his guilt. Now no one ever was, or ever could be, released from guilt, and be reconciled to God, but by grace, and that of a superior order, because it recovers a man from death to life.

Thirdly—It was permanently instituted by Christ. This is evident from his words addressed to the Apostles, by which he gave them a power of loosing and binding. It is acknowledged by those who differ from us in this article of faith, that when our Saviour addressed these words to the Apostles, “Go and baptize all nations,” he did not mean to confine that power to the Apostles, or to the Apostolic times, but meant that it should extend to their successors, and be continued in the Church throughout all ages. Now, by a just parity of reasoning, the general words, *whatever sins* and *whoever sins*, should be likewise taken in a general sense, and not confined nor restricted to persons or times, but should extend to the successors of the Apostles in all ages of the Church: hence it was that the Church believed she had this power from Christ, and practised it at all times from the Apostles’ days down to ours.

Origen. 2 Homily in Leviticus. A sinner is not ashamed to confess his sins to a Priest, and to seek a cure for them.

St. Cyprian, Tract de Laps. cap. 12. Let every one confess his sins, while the satisfaction that each performs, and the absolution given by the Priest, can be valid or of any avail before God.

St. Pacian in Ep. 1, ad semp. You may say,

that God alone can pardon the penitent sinner. True: but whatever God does by his Priests, that is the power of God; for why did he say to the Apostles, "Whatever ye loose, &c.," if he did not really give them power to loose or bind? Should you say, that he gave this power to the Apostles alone, and not to their successors? Then he likewise gave the Apostles alone the power of baptizing, the power of confirming, and to nobody else; for to them alone were addressed the commands of baptizing and confirming. If, therefore, the powers of baptizing and confirming were transmitted down from the Apostles to their successors, so must the power of forgiving sins.

St. John Chrysostom. A power was granted to the inhabitants of this earth, which the Almighty God did not think proper to communicate to Angels or Archangels; for he never said to Angels or Archangels, "Whatever ye loose, &c." Earthly Kings have likewise great power; but their power reaches no further than the body—whereas, the power of Priests reaches to the soul itself, and even extends up to Heaven; insomuch, that what the Priest does here below, God ratifies in Heaven, and the Lord confirms the sentence of his servants. Can any power be greater than this? God the Father has given all power to his Son, and God the Son has transferred this power to Priests.

St. Ambrose, lib. 1, de Pœn. The Church has the power of loosing and binding—but heresy has neither. This power was granted to Priests alone: hence, the Church justly claims both these powers to itself, because it has true

Priests; but heresy, because it has no true Priests, can claim neither.

St. Jerome, Ep. 1, ad Heliod. God forbid that I should say any thing ill of those who, succeeding the Apostles, consecrate the body and blood of Christ, by whose means we have been made Christians, and who, holding in their hands the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, may in some degree be said to sit as judges on us before the day of general judgment.

St. Augustine, Ep. 228. Consider a little, how in any imminent danger, what multitudes of every sex, and of every age, flock to the houses of God—some crying out to be baptized, others to be reconciled to the Church, and others to be absolved; in short, all calling out for some consolation. If there are no Priests then, what destruction awaits those who are obliged to quit this world without either baptism or absolution; but if they have Priests, all then are relieved—some are baptized, and others are absolved.

St. Leo. The God-Man, Jesus, the Mediator between God and man, has communicated to the rulers of the Church, the power of granting the action of penance to those who confess their sins, and afterwards to admit those penitents, through the gate of reconciliation, to a communion of the Sacrament, when they are purified by a salutary satisfaction.

Does penance remit all kind of sin?

Novations formerly, and other heretics laterly, have denied that sins are pardoned in the sacrament of penance. They maintained that God alone could remit sin, that he reserved this pow-

er to himself; and consequently, that it was injurious to Jesus Christ, that man should confess his sins to man, in order to obtain remission of them in the sacrament of penance.

On the other hand, Catholics believe, and always did believe, that it was honouring the justice of God, to think that it was appeased by the humble confession of sins, by contrition, and by the painful practice of penitential works. They believe likewise, that it is respecting properly the divine mercy to think, that God pardons sinners by the ministry of Priests.

In this belief the Catholics are perfectly well founded. They have in the Gospel the most complete and most irrefragable proofs, that Jesus Christ gave authority to his Church to remit sins to man. Can any terms be more clear, more precise, or more formal, than the words which our Saviour made use of on this occasion? He said to his Apostles after his resurrection, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins ye shall remit are remitted." John 20. And again in Matthew 16, "Verily I say unto you, whatever ye loose on Earth, shall be loosed in Heaven."

This doctrine the Catholic Church ever believed and taught, from the time of the Apostles down to our days, and ever condemned as heretics all who presumed to maintain a contrary doctrine. The Church always taught, that God remits sin, and that Priests remit sin, and that these two truths do not contradict each other. God remits sin by an absolute, sovereign, and independant authority. Priests remit sin by a subordinate and dependent authority, which they have received from God. Priests, as ministers

of God, and in his name, communicate sanctifying grace to men. This grace effaces their sins, re-establishes them in the friendship of God and all the other privileges which they had lost by sin.

Is this power limited to any sin or any number of sins?

No: this power extends to all sins whatsoever, let their number or enormity be ever so great. When Jesus Christ gave this power to his Church he made no exception, no reserve of any sin whatsoever. Why should this general declaration be limited, when God himself has declared, "That if the wicked man will do penance for all sins, and keep my commandments, he shall live and not die. I shall never think any more of all the iniquities he has been guilty of."—Ezechiel 18. And again, "I wish not the death of the wicked man, but that he be converted and live."—23.

Secondly—Because God invites all sinners in the world to do penance, and promises them that if they turn to him he will turn to them.

Thirdly—Because God threatens all sinners with damnation if they do not perform penance—Luke 1. Now, God would never make use of promises or menaces to sinners if he had no intention to pardon penitent sinners.

Lastly—Sinners would never be induced to do penance or repent of their sins, if they had no expectation of being pardoned them. As St. Ambrose says, "Hence it would be totally destroying penance to preach up a penance that was not to be succeeded by pardon. Take away from

a sinner the hopes of being pardoned all his sins without exception, instead of reforming him, you will plunge him at once into the most horrid excesses, and drive him to despair."

St. Thomas says, "Why should not a sinner, if he repent, hope to be pardoned all his sins? Is it because sinners cannot repent as they ought? But there are none but the damned who are incapable of repentance. Man while in this world, can always repent with the help of grace. Is it because the Sacrament of Penance has not the power of remitting all kinds of sin? Nothing can be more repugnant to the infinite mercy of God; nothing can be more repugnant to the merits of our Saviour's passion, which are applied to us in the Sacrament of Penance—merits which, according to St. John, are able to efface the sins of the world. 'Tis he that is a victim of propitiation for our sins; and not only for our sins, but for the sins of the whole world."

Hence the Catholic Church at all times promised and granted pardon to all sinners whatsoever that sincerely repented of their sins.

Do not we read in Scripture, that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven in this world or the next? According to St. Thomas, St. Ambrose, and St. Augustine, all that can be justly concluded from that text and two other texts of St. Paul is, that there are some sins for which it is extremely difficult, if not morally impossible, to obtain pardon; because persons guilty of these sins despise the grace of God, by which alone they can be converted and saved; hence we may say that these sins are irremissible.

in the same sense that we say that a disorder is incurable, when the sick person absolutely refuses to make use of any remedy.

Should it be insisted that blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is really a sin absolutely irremissible, it can be answered with justice, according to St. Augustine that by the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, must be understood the sin of final impenitence. A person who dies finally impenitent cannot certainly expect any pardon for his sins.

What do you say to St. Paul's texts, "It is impossible," &c. ?

Most of the Holy Fathers think that St. Paul means baptism, not penance, and consequently means to say, that those who have been once baptized, cannot expect to be baptized a second time. He meant by this reasoning, to excite the newly baptized Christians to preserve their baptismal innocence, because they cannot be renewed a second time by baptism, which he calls the laver of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. St. Ambrose says, that it is evident that the Apostle means baptism in that text, on account of the reason which the Apostle adds for his saying what he had said; because such sinners crucify again the Son of God, as much as in them lies; for it is in baptism only, the Son of God is crucified in us, in order that through him, the world should be crucified to us.

What effect does the Sacrament of Penance produce, in souls well disposed to receive it?

The Sacrament of Penance, by remitting sin, re-establishes a sinner in the possession of sanctifying or habitual grace; by the infusion of this

grace, the converted sinner receives at the same time, all the other infused virtues, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost. He likewise receives actual graces, to conquer all temptations and to persevere in justice. This is the doctrine of St Jerome, of St. Augustine, and of all Catholic Divines.

Secondly—The Sacrament of Penance remits not only the guilt of all sins, but remits also the eternal punishment due to that guilt. This is plain from the Prophet Ezechiel saying, “If the wicked man do penance for all the sins he has committed, if he keep all the commandments of the Lord, if he act according to equity and justice, he shall live, and he shall not die, and the Lord will remember no longer all the iniquities he has done.”

These words certainly insure eternal life to a truly repentant sinner. Before his repentance, he was unjust, an enemy of God, and a slave to sin: but by penance, he becomes just, a friend to God, and his adopted son; he is freed from the eternal punishment which he merited, and acquires a right to the Kingdom of Heaven. This we are assured of by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans, where he says, “There is no damnation for those who are in Jesus Christ.”

It is true, however, that though God remits the guilt of sin by the Sacrament of Penance, and also the eternal punishment due to sin, yet he obliges, ordinarily speaking, all mankind to suffer some temporal punishment for sin remitted, because committed. Hence the saying of St. Augustine, the punishment must be of longer duration than the fault, lest the fault should be thought small, if the punishment ended

with it. According to St. Thomas, the contrition of a penitent may be sometimes so great, as to efface all temporal and eternal punishments due to sin.

Thirdly—The Sacrament revives in the soul, all the merit of the good works, which were performed in a state of grace, before the sinner fell into sin. This we are assured of by St. Chrysostom, by St. Jerome, and by all Catholic Divines.

What is the matter of the Sacrament of Penance?

In this Sacrament there are, according to Divines, remote matter and immediate matter. The sins of the penitent constitute the remote matter. Mortal sin is the necessary matter; and venial sins are a sufficient matter. Mortal sin is called the necessary matter, because the Sacrament of Penance was principally instituted to efface mortal sin. Venial sins cannot be called a necessary, though they are a sufficient matter for the Sacrament; because, according to the Council of Trent, there are several other ways of effacing venial sins, besides the Sacrament of Penance. But the same Council tells us that it is both good and useful to confess our venial sins; and indeed, according to the opinion of Saints and Divines, any one who would entirely neglect confessing his venial sins, would evidently expose his soul to the most imminent danger of damnation.

First—Because a man deprives himself thereby of the special aid which the Sacrament of Penance confers, to conquer his passions and to surmount his temptations.

Secondly—Because venial sins are the true in-

firmities and disorders of the soul. If these infirmities are not cured, if these disorders are not removed by an efficacious remedy, such as penance is, they will certainly in time lead to mortal sin, and thereby destroy at once all the life of grace in the soul; for they produce in the soul guilty of them, a disrelish for piety, and render a man very languid in the practice of virtue, weak in resisting temptations, eager for the gratification of his senses, and lukewarm in the service of his creator. A man will not remain long in this situation without unhappily falling into mortal sin; for as God seldom gives special graces to such a person, he has not sufficient strength to resist the shock of a violent temptation, and consequently falls into mortal sin. Hence the surest and most perfect remedy for him is to confess them, and to confess them with a true contrition, and a firm purpose of not committing them again.

Mortal sins, already pardoned, are likewise a sufficient matter for the Sacrament of Penance, and it is a useful practice to confess them again, as Benedict XIV. teaches us in the Canon Law. For, by confessing them, we conceive a new horror and a new shame for having committed them; and, as a man may, at different times, make different acts of contrition for the same sin, so he may at different times receive absolution for the same.

What is the immediate matter of the Sacrament of Penance?

The contrition, confession, and satisfaction of the penitent, constitute the immediate matter of the Sacrament of Penance. For, as penance was

instituted by our Saviour, as a tribunal of reconciliation, to reconcile sinners to God, it is a necessary consequence of this institution—first, that the criminal must acknowledge his fault, and be sorry for it; secondly, that he must confess it; thirdly, that he must promise to give or make satisfaction for the offence given; and lastly, the sentence of the judge who pardons the fault. All this is done by the contrition, confession, and satisfaction of the penitent; to which the Priest, as judge, adds the *absolution*. Hence, the contrition, confession, and satisfaction of the penitent, are justly deemed the essential parts of the *Sacrament*.

What is contrition?

Contrition, according to the Council of Trent, is a grief of heart for having committed sin—a detestation of sin committed—and a firm purpose of committing it no more. Contrition, therefore, does not consist merely in discontinuing sin, with a resolution of living better for the future: it must necessarily contain a hatred of sin, a sincere detestation of it, according to Ezechiel. *Cast away your iniquities far from ye, by which ye have violated the law of God, and make to yourselves a new heart and a new spirit.* For, as the joy or pleasure we feel in any object, includes always some love for that object, in like manner, the sorrow we feel for any thing, includes a dislike or hatred to that thing. Hence, it is that we should detest sin, not merely on account of the punishment attached to it, but purely on account of the offence given to God by sin, who is the sovereign good.

How is contrition divided?

It is divided into perfect and imperfect contrition. Perfect contrition is a sorrow for having offended God, because we love him above all things, with a firm purpose of offending him no more, and of doing all we can to satisfy for our sins. This contrition should always include a confidence in the mercy of God, and a sincere intention of using our utmost efforts to receive the Sacrament of Penance. For, though it should sometimes happen, that this contrition may be rendered so perfect by the charity annexed to it, as to reconcile a man to God, before he actually receives the Sacrament of Penance; yet, this reconciliation should never be attributed to the contrition alone, independently of the wish and purpose of receiving the Sacrament of Penance, but to the contrition, including this wish and purpose. Hence, it is always true to say, that sins are remitted only by the Sacrament of Penance.

Imperfect contrition is a sorrow for having offended God, proceeding from the consideration of the horror and filthiness of sin, of the fear of hell, of the fear of losing God, &c. The Council of Trent teaches that this contrition, if it sincerely excludes all will of sinning, and is accompanied with a hope of pardon, it is then truly a gift of God, and an impulse of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost does not dwell in the soul of a man thus contrite only, but it excites and prompts the soul to love God. It does not justify a sinner without the Sacrament, but it disposes the soul to receive the grace of God in the Sacrament. It is evident, hence, that con-

trition and attrition differ from each other in several ways.

First—Perfect contrition reconciles a sinner to God, before he actually receives the Sacrament of Penance, provided that this contrition includes a wish and desire of receiving the Sacrament of Penance: this imperfect contrition cannot effect; it can only *dispose* the soul to receive the grace of God in the Sacrament.

Secondly—Perfect contrition is an interior grace of the Holy Ghost, not only exciting the soul, but actually dwelling in the soul. Imperfect contrition is an effect of the Holy Ghost, exciting the soul, but not dwelling in the soul.

Thirdly—Perfect contrition is conceived from a motive of the love of God, above all things, for his own sake. Imperfect contrition is conceived from motives of the filthiness of sin, or of the punishments annexed to it.

Fourthly—Perfect contrition, because it reconciles us to God, is of its own nature incompatible with mortal sin; but imperfect contrition, like faith and hope, is not incompatible with mortal sin.

How many, and what are the qualities of perfect contrition?

There are four qualities annexed to perfect contrition. It ought to be interior, supreme, universal, and supernatural. And first, it ought to be interior—that is, it ought to proceed truly from the heart. As the heart is the principle and origin of sin, contrition, which is the remedy of it, ought to proceed from the heart, and destroy the love of the creature that reigned there. Hence it is that God requires, and is

pleased with, a contrite and humble heart. He is not satisfied with external marks only; for all external marks of grief are useless, except the grief springs from the heart: hence a conversion to be sincere, must proceed from the heart. The Prophet, Joel, advises sinners to be "converted to the Lord with their whole hearts."

When it is said, that this grief should spring from the heart, it is not meant that this grief should proceed from this heart of flesh, which we all have in us; it means that the grief should proceed from our will, which is purely spiritual. When this will is sincerely penetrated with a lively grief, it frequently happens that this grief makes an impression on the sensitive appetite, and produces abundance of tears, on account of the sympathy that exists between the will and heart. Such tears, according to St. Peter Chrysologus, are the sweet waters of Heaven, the gentle dew of the earth, that extinguishes the fire of hell, and washes away from the records of Heaven, God's decree against sinners.

Are tears a sure mark of contrition?

No one should, without due examination and just discrimination, place any great confidence in tears or such other emotions of tenderness. Their want or their existence are very equivocal proofs of the sincerity of contrition. For the Saints assure us, and experience too fatally confirms what they say, that tears in some people, proceed from a different source, than the sorrow of having offended God by sin; and in others from real sorrow; for people sometimes shed tears, not through sorrow for having offended God, but on account of some temporal afflictions caused by their sins.

These afflictions make a deeper impression on their mind, than the injury offered to God. Such were the tears of Esau and Antiochus.

Others easily shed tears on account of the tenderness of their disposition, the softness of their nature, or the lowness of their spirits. These are tears which the Holy Fathers say, were trained up to deceive.

Lastly—Tears often proceed from real contrition. The interior sorrow makes a deep and sensible impression on the heart, and is relieved by a copious torrent of tears. While such tears flow, the soul feels a delicious pleasure in indulging them, and finds a great peace to succeed them. Hence it is justly said, that tears are not always a proof of true sorrow. Secondly, contrition should be supreme ; that is, we should have a greater aversion to mortal sin, than to any other evil whatsoever, and should have a greater sorrow for having committed it, than for the loss of any thing in the world most dear to us.

It does not follow from this, that the grief for having sinned, should be more sensibly felt than any other grief whatsoever. For the sensitive appetite (where grief particularly resides) is more affected and receives a stronger impression, from temporal and corporal evils, than from those of a spiritual and internal nature. True contrition resides in the will, and may truly exist there, without being sensibly felt, and without any external mark or effect of it. Nor is it necessary that this grief should be intensely supreme ; that is, that it should be greater than any other grief whatsoever ; for, while the soul is united to the body, it will be always more affected by tempo-

ral evils than by eternal ones. Still, however, we should endeavour to excite in our souls, as great a sorrow as we possibly can, for having sinned. The Holy Fathers warn us, that our contrition should be ever proportioned to the enormity of our crimes.

The grief for having sinned should be supreme appretiatively, as they call it: that is, that sin should displease us more than any thing else whatsoever. Hence we should be disposed to sacrifice every thing on earth, rather than offend God, and be disposed likewise to suffer every kind of affliction, rather than to commit one mortal sin; because mortal sin is the greatest of all possible evils, as separating us from God, the greatest of all possible good, and depriving us of his grace, the greatest of all possible gifts; for the same reasoning which convinces us that we should love God above all things, should likewise convince us that we ought to hate sin above all things, being the greatest enemy to God.—Thirdly, contrition should be universal; that is, we should detest, without any exception or reserve, all the mortal sins we have committed. This truth we are taught by God himself.—Ezechiel 18. “If the wicked man does penance for all the sins he has committed, he shall certainly live, and shall not die.” And again, “Be converted and do penance, for all the iniquities you have committed, and your iniquities will be no longer the cause of your ruin.” And again, “Cast far from ye all the prevarications, of which ye have been guilty; for if a man do penance for one sin, or for many sins, and neglects doing penance for the rest; or if a

man retain an affection for one sin, though he does penance for all the rest, that man certainly has not a true sorrow for his sins, and his penance is fictitious and imaginary." He that observes the whole law, as St. James says, and violates it in one point, is guilty, as if he violated the whole law. Hence he who preserves an affection for one mortal sin is truly as criminal as if he repented of no sin at all. The Royal Prophet, the model of all true penitents, declares that he turned himself from all his evil ways ; that he hated all the ways of iniquity.

And indeed how can it be truly said, that a man hates sin, because sin offends God, if he do not at the same time hate every sin ; for every sin offends God : and what use can it be to a man to detest all his other sins, if he preserve an affection to one mortal sin ; for every sin that separates the soul from God, is incompatible with the love of God.

First—Contrition should be supernatural : that is, it should be produced in our souls by the Holy Ghost ; it should be founded not on human motives, but on motives manifested to us by faith. And lastly it should have God for its end ; that sin should be detested as an offence against God. For if a person was sorry for sin, merely on account of some temporal afflictions caused by sin, or on account of shame or any punishment inflicted by man for sin, such sorrow could never procure pardon for sin. It is for this reason, that the penance of Antiochus was of no avail, to obtain of God the pardon so eagerly called for and refused ; for Antiochus was sorry for his sins, merely, on account of the bodily pains he felt,

and which he knew were inflicted on him as a punishment of his impiety.

The Prophet Jeremy points out to us, in the clearest manner, that contrition is a gift of God, preventing us by his grace, when he says, "Convert us, O Lord, to thee, and we will be converted."

The Council of Trent teaches us likewise, in formal terms, that contrition is a gift of God, and that no one can repent as he ought, without the inspiration and succour of the Holy Ghost.

The soul of man is mortally wounded by a grievous sin; it is impossible, therefore, that it could ever be restored again to life, without the particular assistance of God, the author of life; and, according to the second Council of Arausic, man could not even begin his conversion, if God did not first inspire him with the thought and desire of conversion.

Contrition includes always a firm purpose of amendment and of sinning no more; for no sinner was ever truly converted, who had not an absolute will of relapsing no more into sin; because it is impossible to hate sin sincerely without having a resolution at the same time to avoid all sins for the future, for future sins are as diametrically opposite to God as past sins. Hence, whenever we lament sins committed, we should always form resolutions of sinning no more, and indeed he who has not these resolutions, can never be said to be really and sincerely sorry for committing a sin, which he is ready to commit again immediately.

It is rather mocking God, to pretend to be reconciled to him, when at the same time a man is

not firmly resolved to avoid every thing that could cause God's hatred.

Our Saviour himself has instructed us in the necessity of this purpose by the words he addressed to the woman whom he pardoned in the Gospel—"Go and sin no more." Hence it is clear, that an infecual will of sinning no more is not sufficient; the will and purpose of sinning no more should be so firm, so efficacious, and so absolute, as to detach the soul entirely from all sin, and from all occasion of sin. David has pointed out to us in what manner and what degree our wills should be thus firm, when he declared, that he had resolved and sworn to keep the Commandments of the Lord: clearly insinuating hereby, that our resolutions of sinning no more, should be as firm, as if we were bound by oath to sin no more.

A great number of confessions are useless and invalid for want of this firm purpose; this can be easily proved by the conduct of any one who confesses and communicates but once or twice a year: while such people are preparing for confession, they abstain in general from sin, well knowing that they would not be admitted to the Sacrament, if during this period, they were in the habit of sinning on as usual; but confession and communion once over, their former habits resume their empire over them, and plunge them again into sin; and what reason can be assigned for their refraining from sin, while they were preparing for the Sacraments; and for falling again into sin after confession and communion. No good reason can be assigned for this difference, but this one alone, that in one case they had a firm purpose of not sinning at all, hence they did not sin; but

in the other case, they had not that firm purpose, they had only a vague and general purpose; and hence they easily sinned as before.

Do you mean by all this that any one who sins after confession and communion, had not a firm purpose of not sinning, when they received the priest's absolution?

No, I mean no such thing, for it is a certain truth, and the doctrine of the Catholic Church, that though we should receive absolution and communion in the state of sanctifying grace, and consequently, have at that time a firm purpose of sinning no more, yet we are not rendered thereby impeccable, nor fixed permanently in a state of grace. To this the mutability of our wills, and the inconstancy of our natures, will oppose a perpetual bar, while we are clothed with mortal bodies, and live as sojourners on earth. I only mean to say, that to have this firm purpose, it is necessary that we should have our wills decided and determined, never to commit any mortal sin again, whereby we would lose the grace of God, and forfeit his love and friendship. A firm purpose, if sincere, will ever include this will and this resolution, for this firm purpose springs from, and is a part of, true contrition; and true contrition, according to St. Paul, generally produces a sincere penance, a solid and lasting change of life that leads to salvation.

From these principles, let me now draw some consequences. And 1st—That every confession that is not followed by a real change of life in the penitent, and by a sincere conversion to God, should be justly suspected of being false or useless.

Secondly—That we have not a single instance,

in scripture, and very few in all antiquity, of any sincere penitent, who was solidly converted, who did not permanently persevere, at least a considerable time, in that conversion.

Thirdly—That most Catholics whose lives are composed of the wretched alternatives of confessing their sins, and of relapsing again into the same sins, have very just reason to be alarmed about their confessions; for it is highly probable, that they are null and sacrilegious, because they want some of the conditions necessarily required for a good confession. It were devoutly to be wished for, that such Catholics, and indeed all Catholics, would reflect seriously, that there are but two roads mentioned in the Gospel; that one is the narrow road, and the other the broad road; that the narrow road leads to Heaven, and the broad road to Hell; that in the narrow road walk all who have never sinned, and all true and sincere penitents; that in the broad road, walk all wordlings and sinners; that there is no road but these two, and consequently, that there is no third road, a road filled with middling people, who are neither good nor bad, people whose lives are made up of sinning and repenting, of confessing grievous sins, and relapsing again into the same grievous sins. No, no: this is the broad road that leads to damnation; people who may be justly called neutral Christians, persons who would not wish to declare war against God, and at the same time have neither courage nor virtue enough to side with him against the sentiments, the maxims, and the conduct of wordlings. No: such persons are at best but nominal Christians, amphibious Catholics; they profess a pure and

holy religion, but do not wish to offer violence to their corrupt inclinations, and practise the maxims taught by this religion.

Is contrition necessary in order to obtain pardon for our sins?

Contrition is absolutely and indispensably necessary, in order to obtain pardon for sin, and was so at all times, as the Council of Trent decides. When our Saviour, in St. Luke, assures us, that unless we do penance we shall all likewise perish ; he has instructed us to weep for sin committed, if we expected to be pardoned, and never again to commit a sin that would cause us to weep for it.

The Prophets in the old law preached the same doctrine to the people. Ezechiel, "Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities." Joel, "Be converted with your whole hearts, in fasting and weeping, and mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments." Hence, it is justly concluded, that penance and contrition for sin, was absolutely and indispensably necessary at all times, in order to obtain pardon for it. The Holy Fathers have constantly and uniformly inculcated the same doctrine.

Tertullian, Repent. Repent. Be sorry to love what God hates ; for you would not allow your meanest servant, to love any one, or any thing you hate.

St. John Chrysostom Repent. Be sorry for your sins, not because you are liable to suffer for them, but because you have offended the Lord, who is, so good, and who has loved you so much, who has suffered so much for you. In a word, this is a truth taught in the old and new law, by all to

whom we are bound to listen ; and indeed our own reason, independently of these great authorities, would easily incline us to adopt this doctrine, for reason teaches us, that it is necessary, in order to be reconciled to a person whom we have offended, that we should be sorry for the offence given; and hate the injustice committed ; that we should punish ourselves for it, and avenge the injury done to him ; that we should have a disgust and aversion to the object that occasioned this offence, and be inspired with desires of destroying or annihilating it ; and lastly, that we should repair, as well as we can, the outrage committed. Let us now apply this reasoning to sin as an offence committed against God, and we shall immediately see, that the natural law dictates to our minds, that we should have true contrition for any sin committed against God, if we expect pardon for it. This led St. Augustine to say, that, though persons may be found, who would not at all acknowledge that they have done ill ; but nowhere can be found a man, who would assert, that we should not repent of an evil which we have really done : the greatest barbarian would not dare say so.

Shouldn't a Confessor examine carefully, whether those who confess to him have true contrition or not ?

Priests are undoubtedly the Ministers of the Lord, and the dispensers of his graces ; they have from God the power of forgiving sins ; however, they are not absolute masters, to use this power capriciously at their will and pleasure, and to absolve all persons indiscriminately, whether they are fit or not. They are bound

by the strictest ties of duty, to administer no sacrament to any one who is not properly disposed, and properly prepared to receive. They are bound by every law of fidelity and prudence, never to give holy things to dogs, nor to throw pearls to swine. Hence, as contrition is one of the dispositions essentially necessary to receive this sacrament worthily, every Confessor is strictly bound to examine carefully, whether his penitent has sufficient contrition to be absolved; for, as St. Gregory the Great says, the absolution of a Priest can only then be effectual, and of service to his penitent, when the judgment and the sentence of the Priest agree with the judgment and sentence which God has pronounced about the penitent. Every Priest, therefore, should carefully examine—first, whether the contrition professed by the penitent, be a true and sincere grief for having offended God; secondly, whether the resolution he professes of never offending God again, be a firm and constant resolution, and sufficiently strong to embrace all necessary means of avoiding all offences against God for the future; thirdly, whether the penitent has a sincere design of satisfying God's justice by works of penance: for all these dispositions are necessarily included in true and genuine contrition.

Are there any external signs, whereby it may be known that a person has true contrition?

It is not easy, in many cases, to know whether a man has true contrition or not. The heart of man is an abyss that cannot be sounded without great difficulty; it is a labyrinth, puzzled with mazes and perplexed with errors, where the

most wary may err or be led into illusion.—Hence, only God alone can penetrate it with security, or judge of it with certainty; and hence it is that God alone can judge, without fear of mistake, whether the contrition professed by the penitent, be sincere or not. However, there are certain external marks by which a Confessor of some experience and skill, may judge with great probability, though not with absolute certainty, that a penitent has true contrition.

The first is, when a penitent has endeavoured, before he presents himself to confession, to move the mercy of God, by humble prayer, frequent sighs, and liberal alms; when he has used some efforts to satisfy the divine justice by fasting, mortifications, and other austerities; when he has retired a while from the world to meditate on his state, reflect on his condition, and practise some works of penance. These marks are seldom or never found in any one who has not true contrition.

On the other hand, when a sinner makes no other preparations for confession but merely an examination of conscience, 'tis a very strong presumptive proof that he has no true contrition.

Secondly—When a sinner has conceived a resolution of changing his life and turning himself to God, and in consequence of this resolution, labours hard, and strenuously endeavours to correct all his evil habits, which formerly led him to sin when he abstains from several things, not criminal in themselves, but which may contribute to nourish his evil habits, it may be judged with safety, that such a person has true

contrition. For to be reconciled to God, and to recover his friendship, he acts now in a quite contrary way to what he formerly did when he was offending God, and in disgrace with him.

On the contrary, a man who uses no great efforts, nor offers any great violence to himself, to conquer his evil habits, may be safely presumed to have no true contrition; for if evil habits be not conquered, there can be no true conversion to God, no true reformation of life, no true change of conduct: and where no reformation of life, no change of conduct takes place, contrition cannot be found there. For, as Tertullian says, “Where there is no amendment, there can be no true contrition.”

Thirdly—When a penitent comes to confess, and manifests clearly that he dreads the loss of his soul; that he has a great terror of God’s judgments; that he cannot think of his sins without a horror and indignation against himself; that he confesses them with tears, humility, and sorrow; that he seems unwilling to diminish their number or enormity, or to excuse himself, then it is safely judged that this penitent has true contrition. For all these marks are marks of a person that hates sin, and has an aversion to it; and, according to the Council of Trent, true contrition includes always a hatred and aversion to sin.

On the contrary, when a sinner comes to confess with great tranquillity and settled composure; when he confesses his sins with as much seeming indifference as if he were confessing the sins of another; when he excuses himself,

and throws the blame of them on others—all these are sure marks of a man insensible of his unhappy situation, and clearly indicate an obduracy of heart.

Fourthly—When a penitent appears eagerly desirous to repair the injury he has done to God by sin; when he submissively accepts the satisfactory works imposed on him by his Confessor, and receives his directions in an humble manner; when he consents, without any murmur, to a delay of absolution; these three marks united together, form a strong presumptive proof that the penitent has true contrition.

On the contrary, when a penitent seems disposed to dispute or argue with his Confessor; when he wishes not to accept a penance proportioned to the number and enormity of his crimes, and consequently indicates no desire of repairing the injury he has done to God by sin; all these afford a sufficient proof that he has no true contrition: for true contrition necessarily includes a sincere resolution of keeping all the commandments of God; and, according to all divines, a desire of satisfying God's justice for sins committed, holds a high rank among the dispositions required by the law of God.

Cannot a person be judged to have contrition, when he makes acts of contrition?

No: for contrition does not consist in words or thoughts, but in acts of the will, and in emotions of the heart towards God. Any one therefore, who wishes to have true contrition for his sins, should examine himself whether he be truly sorry for having offended God; whether he be really afflicted, that he is in disgrace with him;

whether he finds in his mind a desire of pleasing God, rather than of pleasing the world; whether he has an aversion to all kinds of sin whatsoever; whether he is determined to satisfy God's justice, and repair the injury he has done him; whether he has formed a firm resolution of never offending God again, and of rather abandoning the world than of abandoning God; whether he has laid aside and rejected all enmity against his neighbour; whether he has forgiven all his enemies, and endeavour to love them for God's sake; whether he has restored all ill-gotten property; and whether he has abandoned all the immediate occasions of sin. If a penitent can lay his hand on his heart, and answer in the affirmative to all these questions, then he may pronounce, without fear or hesitation, that he has true contrition.

As repeating acts of contrition does not always produce contrition, what methods besides would you advise a sinner to make use of in order to excite contrition?

Acts of contrition are highly useful to every one to make; but their utility is derived chiefly from their being made in a proper manner, and from a principle of grace. Any sinner, therefore, who wishes to make good acts of contrition, should make use of the ordinary means prescribed to obtain this contrition. These means are, first, to retire awhile from the world; secondly, to implore fervently and frequently the God of Mercy, through Jesus Christ, to grant him this great grace; thirdly, to fast for the same purpose; fourthly, to give alms for the same end; fifthly, to practice some other mortifications as will be prescribed him by his Confessor; sixthly,

to request earnestly of the mother of God, his patron saint and angel guardian, to procure him the grace of contrition ; lastly, let him seriously reflect on the following motives of contrition, and after some time reflecting on them, let him then make the most fervent acts of contrition in his power, especially because he has offended a God so good in himself. Let him conclude all by efficaciously and firmly resolving to suffer and lose every thing in the world, rather than to offend God again.

What are these motives, which a person should reflect on, to excite contrition ?

The first motive is, to consider that the great majesty of God has been offended and insulted by sin : for if treason against an earthly king be deemed in all civilized societies the most enormous crime a subject can be guilty of against society, surely it must be a crime of a blacker dye, of greater enormity, to rebel and be guilty of treason against the King of Heaven and Earth, the All-powerful God. St. Bernard made use of this.

The second motive is taken from the goodness and patience of God, which a sinner grossly abuses. That surely must be a flinty heart which the patience and goodness of God cannot soften to compunction. A generous soul, reflecting duly on them, would be animated quickly to turn to God, and to profit without delay of the many graces which the goodness of God is ready to bestow on him in abundance. The Lord, as he himself says, wills not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live ; and shall we ungenerously despise this goodness which in-

vites us to penance, as the Apostle declares. God did not use this patience to the rebel Angels. He allowed them no time to do penance. They were damned, and will be eternally damned for one mortal sin. St. Ephrem used this motive to excite himself to contrition.

The third motive is the justice of God, which can suffer no sin to pass unpunished, and of which the sinner seems to have no terror. It is certain, however, that it is a dreadful thing, according to the Apostle, to fall into the hands of the living God.

The fourth is the severity and eternity of hell's torments. The rebel Angels and damned souls, will suffer all these ruthless torments for all eternity. Every sinner guilty of a mortal sin was liable to the same punishment, and would have suffered it before now, if God in his mercy did not wait for him to do penance; but if he neglect this penance, he may rest persuaded of this incontestable truth, that on the last day he will hear his doom irrevocably pronounced with the devils and damned. "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire."

The fifth motive is, the many benefits and favours which the sinner has received from God, and which he made use of only to offend and insult God. In Isaias, God himself complains of this outrageous ingratitude. God likewise made the same complaint against David, by the Prophet Nathan. Let a penitent then reflect calmly, enumerate carefully all the benefits, favours, and blessings he ever received from God, viz., his creation, preservation, redemption, call to the Catholic Church, his exemption from many evils

and afflictions, and every other spécial grâce, which he has received from God. Let him then consider, that, notwithstanding all these favours and blessings received, he has still treated God as if he were his greatest enemy. God in Isaias severely reproaches the Jews, with their ungrateful conduct. I have nourished said he, children, —I have reared them, and they have despised me. This ingratitude in the Jews was great, and merited every punishment ; still a similar ingratitude in a Christian is much more grievous, and merits a much severer punishment.

The sixth motive is the sufferings of Jesus Christ. It was sin that caused our Saviour's agony in the garden ; it was sin that made him sweat blood ; it was sin that scourged him at the pillar ; it was sin that crowned him with a crown of thorns ; it was sin that nailed him to the cross ; it was sin that made him die an ignominious death. Sinners, not content with having caused to our Saviour all these ignominies and all these torments, renew them again daily by their crimes, and crucify afresh the Son of God as much as in them lies, according to St. Paul.

The seventh is the foulness of sin, and its deformity. Sin is called an abomination in Deuter. —it is called an execration in the Psalms ; it is called filthiness in Micheas ; it is called dirt in Sophonias ; it is called a serpent and snake in Ecclesiasticus ; it is called the work of darkness in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans ; it is called the work of the devil in St. John ; and St. Peter compares a sinning man to a “ sow wallowing in the mire.”

The eighth motive is the enormity of sin. A

man who commits a mortal sin deliberately, abandons the cause and party of God, and attaches himself anew to the devil. By this action he prefers the devil to God, and thinks him better than God; nay, more, the sinner by sinning, endeavours to strip God of his essential attributes: and consequently endeavours, as much as in him lies, to destroy God, to annihilate God entirely; for the sinner wishes that God should not see him, and consequently wishes to strip God of his universal knowledge; or he wishes that God should not punish him, and consequently he wishes to strip God of his justice; or he wishes that God could not punish him, and consequently he wishes to strip God of his power; and thus by making to himself a blind God, a weak God, and an unjust God, he destroys God, he annihilates him as much as in his power lies.

The ninth motive is the fatal effects that sin produces in the soul. A sinner by a momentary pleasure, loses at once charity, the grace of God, the gifts of the Holy Ghost, all the merits, all the advantages of all the good works he ever performed in his life; he loses entirely the friendship of God, and every right and title he ever had to the kingdom of Heaven; he inflicts a mortal stab on his soul, fills it with excruciating remorse, and delivers himself up to the devil as a voluntary slave. Should a man, by a sudden fire or a sudden flood, lose all at once a considerable property, which he had been accumulating his whole life time, with great pains, labour and industry, no one would be surprised to see such a man deeply afflicted for so severe a loss; and is it not a strange blindness, an unaccountable in-

satuation, that a man should be so insensible to the great spiritual losses he suffers by sin? For surely there can be no just comparison formed between the inconstant and perishable goods of this life, and the supernatural, immortal goods of Heaven and eternity.

What is sacramental confession?

Sacramental confession is a declaration and accusation which a sinner makes of his sins to a Priest who has jurisdiction over him, in order to obtain pardon for them through the power of the keys which Jesus Christ granted to his Church.

First, it is called a declaration, because Priests in the confessional act the part of physicians of souls. Sinners, therefore, who wish to be cured of their spiritual disorders, must discover these disorders to their Priests.

It is called an accusation, because the penitent ought to appear as a witness and criminal before his judge; that is, to accuse and condemn himself. Hence it follows clearly that a penitent should not tell his sins to a Priest in a ludicrous or ostentatious manner, but with a true spirit of compunction and humiliation, with an intention of condemning himself and of satisfying the divine justice.

Was confession instituted by Christ?

Yes, as can be proved by scripture and tradition. First, St. Matthew 18, "Amen, I say unto you, whatever ye bind, &c.; and St. John 20, "Receive the Holy Ghost." If our Saviour in these texts constituted the Apostles, and consequently their successors, both as judges and physicians of penitent sinners, and if they could not act in the quality of judges or physicians, if

penitents did not confess their sins in a particular and specific manner to them, it is an easy and natural consequence that our Saviour instituted sacramental confession when he spoke the words above quoted. Now these three points can be clearly proved.

H And first, he appointed them judges; he gave them there the stupendous power of acquitting some in heaven and on earth, and of condemning others in heaven and on earth; and it is evident that, by this power, he appointed them judges: for, if any earthly King conferred on any of his subjects the power of life and death over his people, no one could contend but he appointed such judges over his people.

*S*econdly—Physicians: for he who sent the Apostles, as he was sent by his father, with the same power and the same intentions, never meant that they should bind mankind, but in order to save them; for this was the great and ultimate purport of Christ's mission; but to bind mankind in order to save them, the Apostles should act the parts not only of judges, but of physicians also; that is, by prescribing congruous remedies to the faithful, whereby they may rise from the state of spiritual death to the life of grace.

*T*hirdly—They could not act in quality of judge or physician, if the penitent did not confess his sins; for a judge should observe equity and justice in his decisions; a physician should prescribe suitable remedies for every disorder; but a judge could never observe equity and justice in his decisions, without a cognizance of the cause; a physician could never prescribe

*same confessor & the same
time debts -*

suitable remedies for each disorder, without a specific knowledge of each. The knowledge of one and the other can be obtained only by a penitent's confession and declaration, consequently, &c.

Fourthly—This doctrine must be handed down to us from the Apostles. It was never instituted in any Council: the time of its beginning in the Church cannot be pointed out; no author can be assigned who introduced it first; therefore, it must derive its origin from the Apostles; it must have been transmitted from them to the Bishops who succeeded them: it must have spread, by that means, over all the Churches of the world, and so came down to us.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read these words: “Many of the faithful came, confessing and distinctly enumerating their sins.” Remark here that the faithful confessed their sins; that they confessed them not only to God, but to St. Paul also; that they confessed them not only in general, but in a particular, distinct, and detailed manner. The Greek word *πράξεις* clearly marks a detailed narrative.

Perhaps there is no point of the Catholic doctrine so clearly and so obviously marked out in the writings of the Holy Fathers, of all ages of the Church, as the necessity of Sacramental Confession is.

The four first writers of the early ages are St. Justin, St. Irenæus, Tertullian, and Origen, and three of these speak clearly of Sacramental Confession.

St. Irenæus tells us. “that some women, who had been seduced by the magician, Mark, returned

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deeds -*

afterwards to the Church, confessed their secret and hidden sins, owned they had been seduced by him, and that they loved him to distraction."

Tertullian says that confession is a part of penance ; that a sinner should not be afraid to confess his sins to a man, who is likewise a sinner himself.

Origen declares, "that the way to obtain pardon for our sins is to perform a laborious penance for them ; to bathe our beds with tears ; not to be ashamed to confess them to the Priests of the Lord, in order to obtain a remedy against them."

In the third age St. Cyprian desires "every one to confess his sins here on earth, while his confession could be received."

In the fourth, St. Basil says, "that in confessing our sins we should act in the same manner we do when we declare some infirmities of the body ; for, as we are not fond of discovering our corporal infirmities to any but a skilful physician, who is able to cure us, so, in like manner, we should confess our sins only to those who are capable of applying remedies to them."

St. Gregory of Nyssa exhorts all sinners "to confess their sins to a Priest, and not to be afraid to confess their most hidden sins."

St. Ambrose according to the writer of his life, "heard confessions himself, and, while discharging that function, often shed torrents of tears, and thereby excited sinners to a most lively compunction for their sins."

St. Jerome, St. Chrysostom, St. Augustine, and St. Leo, in several parts of their works, acknowledge "the necessity of confession;" also St. Gregory the Great.

In the seventh century we have, from Councils, many proofs of auricular confession.

First—The Council of Chalons orders Priests who hear confessions to impose satisfactory works on their penitents.

Secondly—The Council in Trullo orders Priests to consider the quality of sins, and the disposition of sinners, in order not to treat with too much rigour, or too much indulgence, sinners who confess to them.

In the 8th century, the second canon of the first Council of Germany, under St. Boniface, Archbishop of Mentz, orders every Colonel of a Regiment to have a Priest, in order to impose proper penances on those who confess their sins.

Alcimus, an author of that age, speaking of St. Riguierus, says, that after his conversion he (the saint) confessed all his sins.

In the 9th century, the Council of Paris forbids Bishops to give any commission to Priests, that would make or occasion them to be absent from their parishes—for fear, as the Council says, that their parishioners should, in their absence, die without confession.

The Council of Worms recommends to the Priests, who hear confessions, to examine carefully the circumstances accompanying sins, in order to impose a suitable penance.

Every other century, down to our times, furnishes so many proofs of their belief and practice in this particular, that it would be entirely unnecessary to cite them in particular.

Ought a person examine his conscience before confession?

Every one who has a mind to receive the

Sacrament of Penance, in a proper manner, should examine his conscience well before he approaches the tribunal of confession.

The Council of Cologne orders all confessors to warn all penitents to examine their consciences carefully before they go to confession.

The Council of Bordeaux desires all Confessors not to remit to any Penitent his sins who comes to confession, without a previous and diligent examination of conscience.

St. Charles Barromeo and the Roman Ritual peremptorily order every person who intends to confess, to examine carefully his conscience before he goes to confession.

Lastly—The Council of Trent informs us, that before confession we should carefully explore, and diligently examine, every secret recess of the heart, every hidden corner of the conscience.

Why is it necessary to examine our consciences so carefully before confession?

Because it is not sufficient for absolution to declare, in general, that we have sinned, or that we are sinners, but it is moreover required that we enter into a minute detail of our sins, and declare them all in particular; it is required that we should declare the number of our sins, and the circumstances that change the species of sin as the Council of Trent declares. Now, to make these declarations in a proper manner, it is entirely necessary that we should know our sins, and recollect them; and how is it possible, to succeed in these as we ought, without seriously, and carefully examining our past conduct—without carefully and seriously reflecting on our thoughts, words, actions, and omissions—without

carefully examining our habits and inclinations? For, without a careful preparation of this kind, it is morally impossible but some faults and sins will escape our memory—consequently we will not accuse ourselves of these faults, nor will we receive any absolution for them; for, let a man declare sincerely all the sins that have occurred to his memory, and let him forget one mortal sin, through a culpable neglect of examining his conscience as he ought, such a man, far from obtaining pardon for his sins, rather aggravates his guilt by an additional mortal sin—makes a confession that is null and void—and must confess his sins over again, according to St. Charles and the catechism of the Council of Trent. Hence it follows, clearly, that the same divine precept which obliges us to confess our sins, obliges us also to examine our consciences carefully before confession.

Is the examination of conscience of any other utility but merely to make an entire confession?

A due examination of conscience is not only necessary, in order to make an entire confession, but is also extremely useful, in order to excite due contrition for our sins; for, as the Council of Trent observes, it is almost impossible that a man who examines his conscience well, and, consequently, who considers attentively the number, the malice, the enormity of his sins, with all their aggravating circumstances, should not view them with horror, should not hate and detest them, and himself for having committed them. A review of this kind, attended with these circumstances, must always excite contrition, according to the Prophet Jeremy, and excite us to return sin-

cerely to God. "Let us trace out our ways, make diligent enquiry, and let us return to the Lord."

What degree of attention and care should a person use in the examination of his conscience?

St. Charles of Borromeo and all the divines agree unanimously in saying, that we should use as much care, attention, diligence and exactness in examining our conscience, as we would in any temporal matter where our life and fortune would be at stake; because our salvation is of higher importance than any temporal matter whatsoever, and the security of our salvation depends, in a great measure, on the accuracy of our examination. This may be illustrated by an example:—Let us suppose two men to have dealings of great importance together;—during the course of many years several debts were incurred, and several bills paid by both parties; and no written documents of these were kept. Let us further suppose that one of these is accused by the other of injustice, ingratitude, and breach of trust, and menaced with a public trial, where his life, fortune, and reputation will be at stake and in danger;—would not the accused man, in this case, retire much from the busy world, in order to recollect, as well as he could, all the money he received and all the money he paid? would not he review carefully in his mind every circumstance of time, place, and persons? would he spare his labour, trouble, and time, in justifying his character, vindicating his conduct, and exculpating himself from the charges made against him? If he had common sense he would do all this, and perhaps a great deal more. Now, let any sinner put himself in the place of this accused man; let him

act towards God as he would act towards man, and he, doubtless, will make a good examination.

If a man were really disposed in the manner you mention, how would you advise him, in particular, to proceed, in order to examine himself as he ought, and afterwards confess as he ought?

First—He should implore the assistance of Heaven, by prayers, alms, and the other usual methods.

Secondly—He should then examine himself carefully on the Commandments of God and of the Church—on the Seven Deadly Sins—on the duties of a Christian life—and, particularly, on the duties of his station and calling; he should mark down, as he goes along, in what and how often he offended God; he should pay particular attention to the circumstances that change the species of sin, to the circumstances that aggravate it, and to the occasions of it.

Thirdly—He should reflect, carefully, on his employments and occupations—on the bad habits he has contracted—on the evil passions he is inclined to—on the companies he has frequented—and on the conversations he has held.

Fourthly—While he is proceeding in his examination, let him always take care to make fervent acts of contrition as he can, both in the course of the examination, and at the close of it, for the sins that occur to his memory then—let him resolve to confess them, and let him refer the sorrow he has actually for them, to the time of his confessing them to the Priest.

What time should a person take to examine his conscience properly?

It is impossible to give a general rule here.

that could suit every body, and the attempt to do so would be both ridiculous and absurd; for, it is obviously evident, that less time would be required for a person who confesses once a week, and who examines his conscience daily, to examine his conscience for confession, than for a person who confesses once a fortnight or once a month—and so on progressively, in proportion to the greater or lesser frequency of confession. Hence, examination should be longer or shorter, in proportion to the length of time elapsed since last confession, to the number of sins committed, to the multiplicity of business a person had been engaged in. These observations are just, yet they never satisfy a timorous person. To meet, therefore, their wishes in some measure, and to quiet their minds a little, I shall mention some of the rules proposed by eminent divines, with regard to the time necessary for an examination of conscience for confession:—

First Rule—A person who confesses once a week, and is in the habit of examining his conscience once or more daily, may be satisfied with half an hour's examination of conscience, prayers, and resolutions—that is, he should spend about ten or twelve minutes in examining his conscience, and the remainder of the half hour in praying for contrition, and in resolving against sin, and his own sins in particular.

Secondly—A person who confesses once a fortnight should double this time—that is, he should employ half an hour, at two different times, in the manner just now mentioned.

Thirdly—A person who confesses once a month should employ two hours for examination and

preparation ; these two hours should be divided into different portions during the two or three days that immediately precede confession.

Though I have in general assigned these different times for examination of conscience, &c., yet I do not mean that they should be adhered to with mathematical exactness, especially by the scrupulous ; they are moral rules, and, like all other moral rules, they admit of many exceptions. One thing, only, I shall urge : all persons above described, who employ the different times before specified, should rest satisfied with their examination and preparation.

What are the faults committed usually against this examination of conscience, and who commit them ?

The first kind of fault is committed by the scrupulous, or by those who have consciences timorous to excess ; they examine their consciences with too much care and too much anxiety ; they rarely think that they ever examine themselves sufficiently. Hence, it frequently happens, that by their too great solicitude they create a real darkness in the understanding, instead of enlightening their conscience by a just and sufficient examination ; they are exploring their consciences for sins they never committed, and they torment their souls to find out faults of which they were never guilty ; with a knife of anatomy they dissect all their imperfections, and think that by probing their souls deeply they will at last find out all the corruption of their hearts. This is a mere illusion of the devil ; he wishes to prevent their frequentation of the Sacraments, by inspiring them with excessive fears of pro-

faning them ; he wishes to excite in their souls a disgust, a disrelish to confession, by the great trouble and uneasiness which the examination causes. If such persons would make the following reflection, and follow the advice of their directors, they would not easily fall into the snare the devil lays for them here : According to the Council of Trent, the sins which we do not recollect after a diligent examination, are always included, and always forgiven, with the sins which the penitent confesses with sufficient sincerity and candour.

Which are the conditions required for a good confession ?

First—It should be simple ; hence all superfluous circumstances and useless stories should be cut off ; a penitent should precisely tell his confessor his various sins, their number, their enormity, their species, and the aggravating circumstances ; a penitent should lay before the confessor the state of his conscience, such as it really is ; he should confess as certain what he knows to be certain, and doubtful what he judges to be doubtful. Hence he should not use round-about stories, nor introduce useless circumstances into his confession. When a penitent begins to tell circumstances either useless, unnecessary, or foreign to confession—circumstances that do not contribute to discover more clearly the state of his conscience, he should be warned to retrench such useless stories ; if he want comfort or advice, these should be sought for out of confession.

Secondly—It should be humble ; this condition is absolutely necessary, in order to repair

the injury done to God, and the contempt shown to his holy law. This humility should be both external and internal ; external humility requires that a penitent should confess on his knees —his dress humbly plain, and not gorgeously fine—his hat off, if a man, and modestly attired if a woman. By internal humility a penitent will be led to tell the faults he has committed, not the good actions he has done ; he will not throw the blame of his bad actions on the solicitations of man, nor on the temptations of the devil ; he will not come to the tribunal with the appearance of rather justifying his conduct than of confessing his sins. Nor will he throw the blame of his sins on his constitution, nor on the impossibility of living well, with those with whom he is bound to live ; on the contrary, true interior humility will ever prompt him to impute all his faults and sins to his own malice, and conscious of his own misery, and the necessity he has of the divine mercy, he will humble himself profoundly before God for all his sins.

Thirdly—It should be pure. By this condition it is required that no one should go to confession through custom, or through a desire of easing his conscience, but purely with a view of confessing his sins, of amending his life, and of reforming his conduct.

Fourthly—It should be sincere : that is, we should confess our sins without any ambiguity or duplicity—without artfully disguising, or wilfully concealing any one sin whatsoever ; we should tell in confession every thing as it really passed, as it really is, or as we think it to be, without addition or diminution ; we should not

either omit or add any aggravating circumstance; concealing or disguising our sins cannot, surely, be of any service to us before God, who sees the most secret folds, and the inmost recesses of our hearts;—on the contrary, such duplicity and hypocrisy must draw down the malediction of Heaven on our heads, according to *Ecclesiasticus*, chap. 2. “Woe to them that are of a double heart.” Confession is generally rendered thereby sacrilegious and null.

Fifthly—It should be frequent. This is a matter of counsel only, on account of the many benefits and advantages that frequent confession confers.

Sixthly—Discreet and modest. It is unnecessary to explain this condition; it is evident by the sins.

Seventh—Prudent. That is, a penitent should accuse himself of his own faults and sins only; consequently he should never hurt or injure the reputation of others by mentioning their sins or faults, except in two cases:—the first is, when a penitent cannot confess his own sins without discovering, at the same time, the sins of others—the second is, when a penitent prudently judges that by telling his confessor the sins of another, the confessor may reclaim or reform that person; for, it is admitted by all, that it would be not only imprudent, but really uncharitable, to tell even in the confessional the sins of others, without necessity; this would be, according to St. Bernard, “lamenting the sins of others, and doing no penance for our own.”

Eighth—It should be free. That is, confession should never be extorted by fear, compulsion, or any external force or violence.

Ninth—It should be made in secret to the Priest alone.

Tenth—It should be speedy. That is, as soon as convenient after the commission of any sin; this condition is of counsel, not of precept.

Eleventh—Accusing. That is a penitent should accuse, and not excuse himself; he should impute his sins to his own faults, and not to faults of others; he should come to accuse himself of faults really committed by him, and not to justify himself from faults falsely imputed to him.

Twelfth and Thirteenth—It should be courageous and ready to obey; that is, the penitent should be ready to obey his confessor in every rational matter, and be resolutely determined to surmount every obstacle that may occur in the way of his salvation.

Fourteenth—It should be vocal; that is, a penitent should declare his sins himself, as well as he possibly could; hence confession by letter, &c. would not do.

Fifteenth—Confession should be accompanied with grief for sins committed; contrition for sins is absolutely and indispensably necessary for the Sacrament—because no Sacrament can exist without matter and form: the form of the Sacrament is the Priest's absolution—contrition is part of the essential matter; both these must be joined together for the Sacrament.

Sixteenth—Lastly, confession should be entire; that is, a penitent is obliged, after examining his conscience carefully, to tell in confession all the mortal sins he recollects, without voluntarily concealing any one of them. This we are taught by the Council of Trent.

The same Council adds, that if a man conceals *willingly* one mortal sin in confession, his confessing the rest is of no service to him ; for, instead of obtaining pardon for them, he commits an additional mortal sin by his concealing his sin or sins.

And he is equally guilty if he omit confessing any sin through culpable neglect.

And, in truth, what good, what benefit can a person derive from concealing a sin in confession ? Can he think that God is ignorant of it, because man does not know it ? Can he expect ever to be cured of this wound, if he never discovers it to the physician ? No ; he certainly never can, nor will. He will be damned by the very means which God gave him to work out his salvation : “ He shall be condemned for his silence, who should have been pardoned if he had truly confessed.”

In what manner should a confession be entire ?

A confession may be entire two ways, either materially or formally. A confession is materially entire, when a person confesses all the sins he has been guilty of, without omitting or forgetting any one whatsoever. A confession is formally entire, when a person, after examining his conscience, with all the diligence in his power, tells all the sins he could recollect. According to the Council of Trent, this formal integrity is only required, and is sufficient for the validity of the sacrament. Hence, if a person, notwithstanding his exactness, should afterwards forget any sin in confession, this forgetfulness is no way criminal, nor does it render the confession null and void : all he has to do is, to confess

that sin afterwards, and to tell his confessor that, in confessing many other sins, he forgot to tell that sin.

What considerations should a man make, in order to excite himself to confess some sins which he is ashamed to confess?

First—He should consider, according to St. Gregory the Great, that the shame a man feels in acknowledging his sins is a fatal effect of the sin of Adam. Hence, men become criminal through disobedience, and afterwards increase their sins by concealing them; and, what makes this shame still more criminal is, that it really offers a gross insult to the goodness and mercy of Jesus Christ, by directly opposing the great desire he has of pardoning us our sins if we do penance for them. When a man, therefore, conceals a sin in confession, he prevents Jesus Christ from applying to him, the merits of his passion, and the unhappy sinner adds grievously to his guilt by the sacrilege he commits.

Secondly—He should reflect on the great confusion he will undoubtedly suffer on the last day, when he shall be obliged to acknowledge all his sins before all the Angels, and all mankind assembled together. What comparison can be then made between the shame and confusion of confessing our sins to one man, and the shame and confusion of confessing them before the Angels and all mankind assembled together.

Thirdly—He should reflect on the condition and nature of a confessor. A confessor is bound to keep as an inviolable secret, whatever he hears in confession. A confessor, like his penitent, is no Angel, but a man, and a sinful man, who

stands in need of the mercy of God, as well as the penitent, and consequently, must sympathize with the miseries to which humanity is liable.

Fourthly—He should reflect on the great blindness of sinners who are ashamed to confess their sins to a man, and are not ashamed to commit these sins before God, who sees them all who can punish them all, and who will certainly punish and publish them all, if they be not confessed here below to a man, who can take cognizance of them for no other end in the world but to blot them out for ever. And, in truth, can there be in the world a greater blindness than this, that a man should refuse to purchase eternal bliss by a momentary confusion, but rather suffer the torments of an eternity, than the shame of half an hour?

What are the faults and defects, on the part of a penitent, that render his confession null and invalid?

By knowing well, and reflecting a little on the conditions which are required to make a good confession, any one can easily know the faults that render a confession null and invalid; however, as an accurate and distinct enumeration of these faults and defects may be useful, I shall explain them:—

The first fault is, when a person before confession did not examine his conscience at all, or did not take the pains and time he rationally should, to examine his conscience. When this negligence is culpable, and when through this negligence he forgets or omits a mortal sin in confession, his confession is null and void.

The second is, when a person confesses with-

out true sorrow or contrition for his sins ; for no one, according to the Council of Trent, can ever obtain pardon for his sins, without due contrition for having committed them. Hence the confession of the penitent, and the absolution of the Priest, will never constitute the Sacrament of Penance without contrition. When our Saviour instituted this useful Sacrament, his design evidently was, that it should be administered in the form of a judgment of reconciliation ; and the nature of such a judgment requires that the criminal should not only accuse himself of having offended God, but should also make every disposition to be reconciled to God.—Now it is impossible to effect this entire reconciliation without a sinner's being truly sorry for the injury he has offered to God, and without being fully determined never to offend him again. A confession, therefore, made without contrition, is null and void. And I am led here to make a useful observation, which I sincerely wish that every one would endeavour to put in practice. It is this : Let every one, after examining his conscience as well as it is necessary, endeavour then, before he goes to confession, to excite himself to contrition for the sins he is going to confess ; for though, perhaps, it should not be absolutely necessary that contrition should precede confession, yet, certainly, according to the most eminent divines, it is the best and safest way.

The third is, when a person confesses without a firm resolution of never relapsing again into sin, or when he retains any attachment or affection for mortal sin, or when he is not entirely resolved to quit and avoid the immediate occa-

sions of sin; for it is certain, that a man who is not firmly resolved to avoid the occasions of sin, retains an affection and liking for sin, because, if he hate sin truly and sincerely he would hate every thing that might engage him to sin. St. Fulgentius says, that it is a mockery of God, and a great means of provoking him to wrath, to pretend to appease him by our words, when we are disposed to offend him by our actions.

The fourth is, when a person *willingly* and *knowingly* conceals, through fear or shame, any sin that he judges to be mortal, or doubts to be mortal, or when he conceals the circumstances that change the species of sin, or the circumstances that aggravate sin, or when he conceals the number of his sins; for, as St. Thomas says, to conceal willingly any of these, is not really confessing, but pretending to confess.

The fifth is, when we tell a deliberate lie in confession. This is acting contrary to the sincerity required in confession; for instance, if a person confesses even a venial sin, which he is *sure* that he has *not* committed, and if he confess nothing else but that venial sin, he is then guilty of a mortal sin, and a sacrilege.

The sixth is, when a person omits confessing a mortal sin, through an affected ignorance of the divine law; for this affected ignorance, far from being a just excuse, is rather an additional sin, according to St. Thomas.

The seventh is, according to St. Charles Borromeo when a person through vanity or hypocrisy, and without any just necessity, tells his grievous sins to one Priest, and his small sins to another Priest; hence a person who tells any mortal sin

or sins he might have fallen into to a strange Priest, and tells his venial sin or sins to his ordinary Confessor, and does this through fear of loosing the good opinion and esteem of his Confessor, commits an additional sin, and makes a confession that is null and void. This manner of confessing is justly reprobated and condemned by the author of True and False Penance, among the works of St. Augustine, by the canon *Consideret* in the Canon Law, and by St. Charles Barromeo; for it is contrary to the simplicity, sincerity, and humility which should accompany confession, and should be deemed true hypocrisy. The penitent wishes to avoid the confusion of telling his grievous sins to his ordinary Confessor; this surely is pride. He risks his salvation in order to preserve the supposed or real good opinion of his Confessor; this is dreadful vanity. He wishes to appear better than he really is to his Confessor, and this, doubtless, is hypocrisy.

The eighth is, when a person confesses through motives merely human; that is, when he confesses in order to appear pious and devout, or when he confesses in order to silence the remorses of a troubled conscience. For an action so sacred as confession should never be performed through human, but always through supernatural motives; for instance, in order to please God or to be reconciled to God, or to recover lost grace.

The ninth is, when a penitent is determined, before hand, not to perform the penance imposed on him by his Confessor; for a desire and intention of satisfying God's justice is essential to the Sacrament of Penance.

In all these nine cases, when the confession is null and void, through the fault of the penitent, he is guilty of a grievous sacrilege, and profanes the Sacrament, and is indispensably obliged to confess the same sins over again.

Is confession sometimes null on account of the Priest?

Confession may be null and invalid, through the faults or defects of a Priest, three different ways: first, if a penitent confesses to a Priest who has no power to absolve him; because the Priest may have been denounced as an excommunicated, suspended, and interdicted Priest, or may not have had the approbation and jurisdiction which he should have had from the Bishop of the diocese, or may not have power to absolve from reserved cases which the penitent may confess, or may not make use of the proper words of absolution.

Is a penitent obliged to confess all his sins, the number of them, their circumstances; both the circumstances that aggravate, and the circumstances that change the nature of sin?

A penitent is undoubtedly obliged to confess all these, as was proved before. The Council of Trent clearly determined, in the 14 Session That a penitent is obliged to confess every mortal sin that occurs to his memory, after a diligent examination of his conscience. Hence, a penitent is obliged to declare all his sins, without exception or reserve; for, a Priest in the tribunal acts as judge, and obliges the penitent to repair the offended justice of God by true, just, and equitable satisfaction. Now, it is impossible that a Confessor could observe equity

in his decisions, or proportion the satisfaction to the guilt, except a penitent declared all his mortal sins, with their number and the circumstances.

What do you mean by the circumstances?

Circumstances are certain conditions or accidental qualities which sometimes accompany an action, and render it good or bad in a greater or lesser degree; they are usually counted seven, and are comprised in the following words:—*Quis, quid, ubi, quibus auxiliis, cur, quomodo, quando.* *Quis* means the person who did the action; *quid* means the action done; *ubi* the place where it was done; *quibus auxiliis* the instruments, the accomplices, or the means made use of; *cur* the end or motive; *quomodo* the manner, and *quando* the time.

These circumstances are of two kinds, viz., circumstances that change the nature or kind of sin, and circumstances that aggravate the sin only; circumstances that change the nature or species of sin are those which superadd a new and special malice to the sin. Hence it happens, sometimes, that one and the same action may be contrary to many commandments, or to many virtues, or to many obligations of the same virtue. An example will explain this: I steal ten guineas from my neighbour; I steal a chalice worth ten guineas out of a chapel; the first action is simply theft, and is contrary to one virtue only—justice. The second action, by the circumstances, becomes sacrilege, and is contrary to two virtues—justice and religion.

The aggravating circumstances are those which aggravate only the malice of the same

action, without superadding any new sin, but special malice to it. For instance, a man steals a guinea; this is a mortal sin. He steals an hundred guineas; this circumstance greatly aggravates the sin. He steals this sum from a poor man, who had no more, and is rendered thereby incapable of supporting a large family of children; it is evident that this circumstance considerably aggravates the crime.

A person is indispensably obliged to tell the circumstances that change the species of sin, otherwise he will not make a right confession; for if he does not declare these circumstances his Confessor cannot judge properly of the nature and enormity of his sins, nor impose on him a suitable penance, justly proportioned to his sins. Hence, a person who designedly conceals any circumstance of this kind, not only renders his confession null and void, but is likewise guilty of sacrilege, and adds considerably to his guilt.

On the same principles and for the same reasons that the confession of the circumstances which we have just mentioned is judged necessary, it is likewise deemed, by the most eminent divines, that the confession of the notably aggravating circumstances is also necessary. But here an important remark should not be omitted: for, though it be certain that we are bound to tell such circumstances as considerably aggravate a sin, yet it should by no means be inferred from this, that we are indispensably bound, on every possible occasion, to declare every circumstance that aggravates our sins; for this would be a dreadful embarrassment to Penitents and Confessors, and a torture insupportable to timorous consci-

ences and to scrupulous persons; for it is not always easy to discriminate the circumstances that aggravate sins so considerably as to oblige us to confess them. Hence, let us endeavour to confess them on the following occasions, and not to be uneasy about the rest:—

First—We ought to confess all aggravating circumstances, when our Confessor asks us any question about them: the contradictory doctrine of this has been condemned by the Church.

Secondly—We should confess an aggravating circumstance when it makes a sin a reserved case, and which without that circumstance would not be a reserved case.

Thirdly—An aggravating circumstance should be confessed when a censure is annexed to a crime on account of that circumstance; for instance, when a person strikes a Priest or a Bishop.

Fourthly—The aggravating circumstances should be confessed when there is question of a restitution to be made, of a satisfaction to be performed, or a scandal to be repaired; otherwise a Confessor could not, in these cases, give suitable directions to a Penitent what to do.

Fifthly—They should be confessed when they make a sin mortal, which without them, would be only venial: for instance, a person stealing a halfpenny, who had an intention at the same time of stealing a guinea.

Sixthly—When sins are multiplied by any one action; for instance, when a person slanders or detracts many at once, or when he is guilty of slander or detraction before many persons.

Seventhly—In all cases of theft and robbery.

the quantity taken and the condition of those from whom taken should be always told.

Is it necessary to confess venial sins?

The Council of Trent has determined that it is not absolutely necessary to confess venial sins, in order to obtain pardon for them; because venial sins do not deprive the soul of sanctifying grace, and because there are other means of expiating them besides a sacramental confession. But the same Council adds, that far from its being a presumption to confess venial sins, as Luther advanced, on the contrary, it is extremely good, useful, and laudable to confess them. This is the doctrine of all our Divines, and is confirmed by the practice of all the Saints with whose lives we are acquainted. St. Francis of Sales, in particular, recommends strongly this practice to all persons who aspire to any perfection in Christianity: he says, in his introduction, &c., "that when we confess our venial sins with true contrition for having committed them, and with sincere resolutions of not committing them again, we receive not only absolution from them, but also great strength to avoid them for the future, great light to perceive and know them, and a powerful grace to repair the losses they occasioned to our souls. By this one action of confessing," says the Saint, "we practice the virtues of humility, obedience, simplicity and charity: in a word, more virtues than we could well do in any other action whatsoever."

Are there any other reasons why we should confess venial sins?

Yes, many. *First*—Because it is not easy, in many cases, to discriminate exactly, whether

our sins be mortal or venial. St. Augustine says, "that in many cases it is very difficult to find out, and most dangerous to determine absolutely, what sins are mortal and what venial. For my part," continues the Saint, "I was never able to determine this in all cases."

A person who is in the state of sanctifying grace, may easily conceive a horror for every thing that displeases God—consequently, such a person could conceive a horror for venial sins, and could confess them with that disposition, and with a resolution of not committing them again; this can be done, and I believe is frequently done. On the other hand, I must declare, that if a person confess only venial sins, without due contrition and true resolution, such a confession would be null, void, and sacrilegious. It would be null and void for want of contrition, because contrition is absolutely necessary to constitute the Sacrament of Penance; it would be sacrilegious, because such a confession would be a profanation of the sacrament. Hence, a person who confesses venial sins only, is in great danger of committing a grievous sin, for want of due contrition for them.

Secondly—A confession of venial sins, without a firm resolution of never committing them again, is equally dangerous; for, a firm resolution is inseparable from true contrition, and constitutes a necessary part of it, and, neither mortal nor venial sin is ever forgiven, without our wills being entirely detached from it; and, to speak in plain terms, is it not insulting God, is it not mocking him, to ask his pardon for faults, which we are resolved not to avoid, and

to which we still retain an affection? When we confess, therefore, our venial sins, let us always endeavour to excite in our souls proper contrition for them, and a firm resolution of not committing them again; and let us, at the same time, persuade ourselves, that we have neither the necessary contrition, nor resolution, if we are always relapsing into them as frequently as before—if we find that our lives are no way reformed or amended, with respect to them—if we do not avoid the occasions of them—if we do not make use of the means prescribed to us for getting the better of them—and, if we do not make proper efforts to subdue them.

What is to be done in this case?

If any one confess venial sins, and is not sincerely resolved to correct them, because they are but small sins, such a person should not be absolved at that time; for such sentiments could never be infused into our minds but by the devil. St. Bernard treats this error as a blasphemy, and as leading to final impenitence. The best advice to be given to people of this description is, to request and desire of them, to excite in themselves, by reflection and reading, as much horror as they can for every offence against God, be it ever so small—then to confess these small sins daily to God, to lament them daily before him, and to beg of him the necessary grace to correct them; and lastly, to shun carefully the company and the occasions that caused them to commit these small sins—for it is certain, that it is sometimes more difficult to correct small faults, than to correct great ones; great faults naturally, and of themselves, inspire us with

horror against them, but venial sins do not, generally speaking, inspire us with any such horror. On the contrary, they plunge our souls into a stupid indolence, and prevent them from making any generous efforts to extricate us from the languid sickly state we are in. St. Chrysostom.

What should a Confessor do to these people?

When a Confessor knows a Penitent well, from sufficient experience—when he knows that this Penitent frequently commits the same venial sins, without any amendment or sincere efforts to amend—when he knows that this Penitent has an affection for venial sin—the best and surest method would be, to refuse absolution, sometimes, to such a Penitent, and to exhort him to change the evil dispositions he retains with regard to venial sins; for a Confessor may be deceived, and should justly be afraid, that what he in some cases thinks to be a venial sin, might be a mortal offence, or at least would lead to a mortal sin; and he should likewise be afraid that God would deprive the Penitent of all special graces, on account of the affection the Penitent retains for venial sin. And if God once withdraw or withhold the special graces, then there is every probability and every danger, that the Penitent will soon tumble into mortal sin, and, perhaps, be lost for ever.

Is this rule to be observed with respect to all who tell venial sins in confession?

No, by no means. There is, and there ought to be, a just discrimination made between Penitents who confess only venial sins; for, some commit venial sins through frailty or

surprise, and others with full deliberation and affection to them. Penitents who commit sins through frailty, through surprise, inadvertently, or indeliberately, are sorry for them immediately after, or as soon as they perceive them; they have no affection or attachment to them—they endeavour to avoid the occasions of them—they make use of the means prescribed to conquer them—and they easily and quickly conceive a sorrow for, and a dislike to, all their faults; such, for instance, are those who confess slight emotions of anger, little fretfulness now and again, and some little excess in eating, drinking, talking, and amusing themselves. When Penitents are not guilty of these sins habitually, when they do not commit them habitually, but occasionally, now and again—or when they commit them indeliberately or inadvertently—such Penitents can safely receive absolution every time they confess. But Penitents who commit venial sins through habitual attachment to them, or through affection to them, or through a custom not sufficiently retracted, or who frequently and deliberately relapse into the same venial sins, so, as to have the same kind of sins, and the same number of venial sins always to accuse themselves of in confession, such Penitents should be absolved with a great deal of fear, caution, and circumspection, on the part of the Confessor; for it is highly probable that they had not true contrition for these sins, nor a sincere resolution to correct them.

What considerations would you advise people of this last description to make, in order to reform their venial sins?

First—They should consider that how small

soever any sin may appear to be, yet they must give an account of it to God on the last day, as our Saviour himself has declared in the 12th chap. St. Matthew.

Secondly—That the smallest sin sullies the soul, and ulcerates and wounds it more or less. Now, let any rational person be asked, whether one should not take care that his clothes should not be foully dirtied; he would surely answer that every one ought to take such a care. Let him be asked again, should not a person either prevent or quickly remove, if in his power, any nasty sores, ulcers, biles, or blotches, from spreading over his hands, face, or skin, and disfiguring his person and destroying his health; the second answer would doubtless be, that he should be a fool or a madman that would not do so. And yet all this happens to our soul, according to St. Augustine, and we heed it not.

Thirdly—That they should never consider small sins as trifles not worth attention; for, as St. Augustine says, “small sins, like small drops of rain, will by their frequency and number become, in time, like mighty floods that ravage the fields, desolate the country, and overturn all the mighty works of man.

Fourthly—That they would carefully weigh and diligently attend to the following words of the Holy Ghost:—“He that despiseth small things shall fall off by degrees;” and these other words: “He that is faithful in small things will be faithful in great things.” On which let me only remark, that there is no maxim in the Christian morality more fatally confirmed by ex-

perience, than that a contempt of small sins conducts, insensibly, to an entire breach of the most essential obligations of religion, and that a neglect in the ways of God is never far removed from a total falling off, for these reasons: *First*—because the special graces, which are necessarily required to persevere in virtue, are never continued to such persons; *Secondly*—because the passions which drag us to vice are daily fortifying themselves in them; and *Lastly*—because all external succours of piety become in time entirely useless to them.

Let me implore of all those people whom this instruction peculiarly interests, and these are souls truly pious but too full of imperfections, to revive in their hearts that first efficacious grace which brought them from the corruption of the world into the road of salvation, and into the way to Heaven; let them carefully avoid the immediate occasions which conviction or experience teaches them to be fatal; let them aspire to, and wish for the love of God, with all the powers of their souls and faculties of their minds; let them nourish and increase this love by an interior life; that is by fervent prayer, by interior recollection, by due attention to the presence of God, by mortifying their senses and passions, by a constant but tranquil watchfulness over themselves.

Let them persuade themselves, that there is no security nor consolation in piety without fidelity in everything. whether it be great or small—that by every relaxation in which they indulge, they fortify or multiply their passions and their attachments—that if they take away, fervour, exactness, and perseverance from the perform-

ance of their actions, and the discharge of their duties—they cast away at once, all the sweets and charms of piety and virtue—and lastly, that any one who limits himself in his resolutions and his conduct, to the merely avoiding of great sins or great crimes, will never persevere long in virtue.

Let us now beg of the Almighty giver of great gifts to bestow on us such graces as will enable us to conquer all our weaknesses, languors, and imperfections, as he before enabled us to conquer our greater crimes; let us request of him to grant us a heart truly fervent and truly faithful, as he has been graciously pleased to take from us the depraved and criminal hearts we formerly had; let us beseech him not to leave the work unfinished which he has begun in us, but as he has brought us into the right road to Heaven, that he would make us worthy to obtain the crown promised to all those who will valiantly fight and finally persevere. Amen.

Should a person confess a sin of which he is doubtful whether it be mortal or venial?

When a person doubts whether a sin be mortal or venial, either because he has not sufficient reasons to prefer one opinion to the other, or because the reasons on both sides appear to him to be equal, that person should certainly confess that sin; for if he omit or neglect to confess such a sin, he exposes himself to the danger of concealing a mortal sin in confession, and consequently, to make a sacrilegious confession. Hence, the duty and obligation of a Penitent is, to confess his sin, such as it is, and leave the

judgment of it to his Confessor. It is the Confessor's business to discriminate between sins, and to determine which is mortal and which is venial.

Should a person confess a sin that he has some doubts he never committed?

He should, certainly, for the reasons just now assigned. A person should confess, as certain, sins which he is sure he has committed; he should also confess, as doubtful, sins which he is doubtful whether he has committed or not. For he would be guilty of a grievous sin if he confessed as certain, sins which he was sure that he never committed; but, if afterwards he became certain that he committed some sins which he had before confessed only as doubtful, he should then confess these sins over again, as certainly committed, because they were not confessed as they ought to have been in the former confession.

Likewise a Penitent should confess a sin which he knows to be mortal, which he knows he has committed, but which he is not sure that he has confessed. The reason is, that when a person is sure of the obligation of any commandment, and when he is not sure that he has fulfilled this commandment, then the commandment remains in all its force, and must be complied with.

Is a person obliged to confess a sin which he has forgotten to tell in his former confessions, when this sin afterwards occurs to his memory?

It often happens that a person, notwithstanding all the care and diligence he has used in examining his conscience, forgets some mortal sin of which he has been guilty. It likewise often happens that a person forgets to confess some

sins he had recollected while he had examining his conscience. Now if the neglect in examining his conscience were not culpable, or the omission voluntary, the forgotten sins, according to the Council of Trent, were pardoned, along with the sins that were confessed; but there still exists a strict obligation of confessing them afterwards, when we recollect them, for the divine precept of confessing our sins extends to, and comprises all sins which our conscience reproaches us with. This is the doctrine of the Councils of Lateran and Trent. It is allowed by all Divines, that a perfect act of contrition remits, at once, all sins whatsoever; yet, the happy person who would be blest from Heaven with this perfect contrition, would be absolutely and indispensably obliged to confess all these sins afterwards to a Priest, if he could get one; because, perfect contrition in itself, and in its own nature, necessarily involves an intention and will of confessing all our sins. By the same rule, and by a like parity of reasoning, we are obliged, in subsequent confessions, to confess the sins we had forgotten in our former confessions, though these sins should have been before pardoned by God; and this we are obliged to do in the very first confession we make after recollecting them; Pope Alexander 7th has so defined it. Hence, any one who forgets a mortal sin in confession should, if he recollects it afterward, confess it before he goes to communion; but not so of venial sins.

When is a person obliged to confess?

There are two precepts, which oblige a man to confess all the sins he has committed since his baptism, viz. a divine precept and an eccl-

siastical precept. As confession is a remedy instituted by God to cure sin, it is certain that we are bound, by the divine precept, to confess our sins at the hour of our death, in case we ever committed a mortal sin.

Secondly—It is equally certain that a person who commits mortal sins is bound, by the divine precept, to confess his sins often in his life. Hence, a person who commits mortal sins, and remains some years without confessing them, not only sins against the ecclesiastical precept, but sins also against the divine precept.

It is from these principles that the Council of Milan declared, that the faithful were always obliged to confess, whenever they began or undertook, any matter of importance, difficulty or danger. Hence, all persons are bound to confess before they go to sea—before they begin a journey by land, attended with danger—before they go to fight in a lawful battle; *secondly*, women are bound to confess before child-birth; *thirdly*, all are bound to confess before they begin a work of great importance and difficulty; *fourthly*, all are bound to confess who are preparing to receive any other sacrament, particularly when they are conscious to themselves that they have sinned. By the ecclesiastical precept, every one who is come to the years of discretion is bound to confess at least once a year.

Are children bound by this precept?

Children, when they arrive to the years of discretion, are as bound by this precept as adults are. The Council has not precisely determined the age, a person should have come to the years

of discretion. The reason probably was, because the years of discretion are different in different children; some arrive to that period much sooner than others. The opinion that commonly prevails among divines is, that children arrive to the years of discretion about seven years, or a little after it; for it is known by experience that most children, especially in towns, are capable of distinguishing between good and evil at that age. Hence, parents should send their children to confess when they are between seven and eight years of age; it is not that the Priests will give the absolution indiscriminately to all who present themselves so young—no, Priests will not absolve any but those whom they perceive to have the maturity of judgment sufficient to make them capable of committing sin, and capable of having contrition for it when they confess it; and to the rest a Priest only gives some little advice, prescribes some prayers, and gives them his blessing. These are the instructions of St. Charles Borromeo.

Is it useful to confess sins which we before confessed and were absolved from?

It is very useful to confess sins which we had before confessed, and to be absolved from them again. This laudable practice is not only advised, but even peremptorily ordered, by the constitutions of several religious orders: the founders of these orders intended, that by these reiterated confessions and absolutions, the penitents should be washed, like David, still more and more from their sins; for these repeated confessions being made always with a fresh grief for having offended God, and with a fresh con-

fusion in the declaration of sin, are always a new and additional satisfaction made to God for sin, and consequently, always diminish the temporal punishment due to sin. And the absolution repeatedly received produces, also, an augmentation of habitual and sanctifying grace, in proportion to the good dispositions of the penitent.

It follows, seemingly, from what has been just said, that general confessions are sometimes useful?

General confessions are extremely useful to all except persons really scrupulous. We find many instances of them in all ages of the Church. Socrates, in his History of the Church, mentions "a general confession made in Constantinople in the fourth century." St. Eugenius, in his Life of St. Eloi, relates "that the Saint made a general confession of all his sins." Hincmar, of Rheims, mentions of himself, "that he advised Pepin, King of Aquitain, and the Bishop of Soissons, to make their general confessions." "St. Louis, King of France, often made general confessions," according to Godfrey, the writer of his life. In the rule of St. Fructuosus, and in the statutes of the order of Cluny, regulations were made, "that no one should be received into that order who had not made a general confession of his whole life."

In what cases would it be necessary to make a general confession?

Any person who has made a sacrilegious confession, and who continued to confess afterwards without repairing that fault, is absolutely obliged to make a general confession. In such a case no other remedy can be used, no other method can be applied to recover the grace of God.

Secondly—When sufficient care has not been taken, nor sufficient pains used to make our former confessions as they ought to have been made; for instance, when a person has examined his conscience negligently, and has not taken sufficient time or pains to recollect and discover his sins; or when a person confesses without due preparation, and rather through custom or some other human motive, than with a sincere desire of amending his life and reforming his conduct.

Thirdly—When a person finds that he has derived little or no benefit from his former confessions; for as St. Gregory the Great remarks, “it is only by the amendment of our lives, and by the reformation of our conduct, that we can truly judge of the sincerity of our repentance.”

Fourthly—When a person has been very unfaithful in executing the resolutions he had formed, and negligent in avoiding the occasions of sin.

Fifthly—When a person has performed in a careless and slovenly manner the penance imposed on him.

Sixthly—When a person leads the same worldly life after confession that he led before it, or when he relapses into the same sins soon after confession, and without any extraordinary occasion, or violent temptation; for these are all unequivocal proofs, that in his former confessions he had not received the grace of the sacrament.

Is it useful to make a general confession in any other case but those just mentioned?

Though a person should have no doubt about the validity of his former confessions, yet it is

extremely useful to every body to make one general confession at least, for it is a powerful means of securing his salvation and of sanctifying himself still more and more.

St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis of Sales lay down two reasons, sufficiently strong to induce every Christian attentive to his salvation to make a general confession :—

The first is, to repair any fault or error which may have crept into any of our former confessions.

The Second is, to obtain the great graces and benefits which a general confession usually confers ; for, when a sinner carefully examines all the sins of his past life—when he views, in a collected point, the number and enormity of his past transgressions, he is struck with terror and remorse at the frightful picture—he melts into repentance, and is strongly impelled to free himself from the shameful bondage of sin, to which he had been so long a wretched captive ; he conceives a just horror of sin, and returns to his God with all the fervour in his power ; he admires the greatness of God's mercy, and begins to entertain hopes of pardon ; his troubles gradually diminish, and finally vanish away, and in their place succeed unruffled peace, calm joy, and serene comfort. In a word, a general confession, according to the author of True and False Penance, lays open clearly to us our fatal passions, &c., prompts us to make use of the most efficacious means of living as we ought, and greatly disposes us to die well and like a true Christian ; it frightens away the devils from us, it shuts the gates of hell, and opens the gates of Heaven to us.

On these principles, and for these reasons, St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis of Sales urge the utility of general confessions to most Christians, but particularly to all who are sincerely converted from the world to God—to all who are preparing for death—and to all who are preparing to enter on a new way of life and calling.

Scrupulous persons should not think of making general confessions, after having once made one before; for to such persons general confessions rather increase than lessen their fears, troubles, and anxiety—yet there are no persons more solicitous or more earnest to be always making general confessions. It were much to be wished that they took as much time and pains in conceiving true sorrow for their sins as they do in thinking of telling them, and plaguing their Confessors with the constant repetition of them. By adopting this rule they would not only save their Confessors a great deal of trouble and time, but gain considerably by it themselves; for a true conversion does not consist so much according to St. Gregory in confessing our sins, as in being truly sorry for them.

Lastly—When any one aspiring to perfection chooses a permanent director to guide him, he should always give to this director a sketch of his whole life—the outlines of his past conduct. It is not necessary to confess all his sins with the exactness and accuracy that a general confession requires; but indeed it is necessary in some sense, at least extremely useful to any penitent aspiring to perfection, that a prudent and skilful director should be acquainted with the chief sins of a penitent's life.—Without this

knowledge, a director cannot for a long time, be able to discriminate common sins from habitual sins, or sins flowing from habits long indulged; he cannot, for some time, know sins committed from a predominant passion; he cannot be enabled to give a proper rule of life proportioned to his past faults, and present wants; in short he must be a considerable time before he can direct such a penitent properly, for in many of his directions he acts through conjecture only, or at best, by the inferences he draws.

How should a person make a general confession?

The best method of making a general confession would be to make it in a retreat. Any one who could afford it, and could spare time for so desirable a purpose, should retire from all worldly business for six or eight days, and spend his time in the following manner, or in some manner similar to it:—

After rising at a regular hour, spend an entire hour in prayer and meditation. *Secondly*, Hear mass, and offer it to God, in order to obtain all necessary graces to make your retreat as you ought. *Thirdly*, Read in some of the books hereinafter mentioned till breakfast. *Fourthly* Breakfast at a regular hour: spend at least three quarters of an hour after breakfast, either in walking, or in any other manner equally innocent; but remark carefully, that during the hours of recreation, and indeed during the whole time of retreat, you ought to observe silence, except when you speak on necessary matters, or on spiritual subjects. *Fifthly*, After breakfast you are to meditate and pray again for another hour,

and afterwards read in some spiritual book till near twelve o'clock. After saying the *Angelus*, &c. and some other vocal prayers, you are to retire to some private place, with pen, ink and paper, and the table of sins. Read carefully the table of sins on the first commandment; pause a while seriously on every branch of that commandment; see whether you have been guilty in thought, word or deed, of any part of it; compute, as nearly as you can, how often you have been guilty in thought, word and deed. If you cannot compute exactly, or near it, the number of times you have been guilty, compute at least the length of time you were in that state, and how often you may have fallen into sin each day, week, or month of that time. You must begin at the years of discretion, and proceed thus gradually to the present time, reflecting carefully on the persons, places, and occasions you might have been in. Then mark your sins down in your paper, their species, their number and their circumstances. But here I must call your attention to an advice of the utmost importance. When, during your examination, you recollect any grievous sin you may have committed in your life, do not proceed further in your examination till you have made, for these sins, acts of contrition, acts of thanksgiving to God, that he waited patiently so long that you might do penance for them—acts of the love of God—and resolve to confess them to your Confessor as soon as you can. In this manner you must proceed through all the commandments, the seven mortal sins, and the precepts of the Church. It is necessary that you should, every day, spend an hour

or thereabouts in examining your conscience in this manner. After your examination is over, spend the intermediate time between that and dinner, partly in walking about, partly in reading or thinking.

After dinner, at a convenient hour, you should again begin to read in such books as your Confessor directs you.

The subjects of your meditation during the week should be, the end for which you were created, Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven, Eternity, the Grievousness of Mortal Sin, the Importance of Salvation.

The books to be chiefly read are—Sinner's Guide—Manning's Moral Entertainments—the Difference between Temporal and Eternal—Butler's Posthumous Works—the Elevation of the Soul—Parson's Christian Directory, and Butler's Lives of Saints. This last work chiefly in the evening.

How should a person who could neither afford it nor spare time, prepare himself for a general confession?

Tradesmen, labourers, or poor people, who could not spare time enough for a retreat, or who are incapable of following the order already prescribed, should prepare themselves as follows:

First—They should lay out from ten days to a fortnight for this preparation. *Secondly*—They should employ every day during that time, about three quarters of an hour in the morning and the same at night in examining their conscience and saying prayers suitable to the occasion. *Thirdly*—They should read some chapters in a good book every day; or if they cannot read,

they should, if possible, procure some person to read for them. *Fourthly*—They should give some alms every day in proportion to their means. *Fifthly*—They should practice some mortification. *Sixthly*—They should hear mass; and if they can afford it, get some masses said for them. *Seventhly*—they should visit the Blessed Sacrament every day for the same purpose.

What is meant by satisfaction?

The word satisfaction has different significations. It sometimes means the content we give another; sometimes the pleasure we take in any thing; and lastly, the reparation of an injury done any one. Satisfaction in the sacrament of penance means, the reparation which a sinner makes to God, either in imposing on himself, or accepting voluntarily from others, some punishment for sin, to repair thereby the injury done to God by sin. These punishments usually consist in some painful good works, which the sinner does himself or accepts from others: such as fasting, prayer, alms-deeds, mortifications, humiliations, and the afflictions and tribulations of this life, when they are accepted and borne patiently.

This satisfaction is twofold—voluntarily satisfaction and sacramental satisfaction. Voluntary satisfaction, according to Tertullian, is a judgment or sentence which a man passes on himself, in order to prevent a sentence of condemnation from God.—Hence, such a sentence will be neither true nor just, unless a man punishes himself for sin, in order that God may pardon him; for a sentence of condemnation should be always followed by the punishment of the criminal; a sinner should always punish himself with

severity in order to induce God to shew him mercy. Hence, it is not sufficient for a man who has sinned to amend his life and reform his conduct. He must besides satisfy God by the painful works of penance ; for, as St. Gregory the Great says, " It is the fixed will of God, that a sinner who has abandoned God, in order to gratify himself by sinful pleasures, can only return to God again by the bitterness of tears and the severity of afflictions."

The satisfaction which a sinner imposes on himself, though extremely useful, however, does not constitute a part of the sacrament of penance. It is only the satisfaction which the Confessor imposes on the penitent, after confession, that can be truly the sacramental satisfaction. This satisfaction was meant to repair the injury done to God by sin, and to ransom a greater punishment which a sinner has merited. It derives its merit and efficacy from the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, applied to us, in the sacrament of penance. Hence, it follows clearly, that the satisfaction imposed by a Priest in the Confessional, is much more useful and efficacious than any satisfaction a penitent can lay on himself.

First—Because the satisfaction imposed in the confessional, derives its merit and efficacy, not only from the good dispositions of the penitent, but also, from the force, strength, and nature of the sacrament itself. Hence these satisfactions have a twofold merit: the merit they derive from the dispositions of the penitent, and the merit they derive from the sacrament itself. And, hence also, they are more efficacious and more satisfactory on account of the sufferings of Jesus Christ.

Secondly—Because these sacramental satisfactions being imposed by the Church, a person who complies with them, practices at once, the two virtues of humility and obedience, virtues highly agreeable to God, and peculiarly calculated to cure our pride and disobedience, the two great sources of all our sins; and consequently, such a person merits and receives a greater abundance of graces to preserve him from relapsing into sin.

Is this satisfaction a necessary part of the sacrament?

The Council of Trent says, that is a part of the sacrament of penance. It says further: that this part of the sacrament was more strongly recommended to Christians, by the Primitive Fathers, than any other part of the sacrament whatsoever. The reasons assigned by the Holy Fathers are, that—Penance is a painful and laborious baptism, and that we can never be born a second time in Jesus Christ, without many a tear and many a toil. This is a conditional debt, which God's justice rigorously exacts from all who wish a remission of sin. Hence, satisfaction is necessary, not only as a preparation made to obtain pardon for sin, but is really necessary as a just punishment for sin. It is a mere act of justice, by which we endeavour to repair in some measure the honour we robbed God of, and the insult we offered him by sin: for the Divine justice requires, according to the Council of Trent, that those who were once freed from the slavery of sin and the devil, and who afterwards afflicted the Holy Ghost, and profaned the temple of God, should never

again be received into favour on so easy terms as persons who, before baptism, committed sins through ignorance ; as the order of justice, then, strictly requires, that we should act justly with all the world, as much as in our power lies, and that nothing but a physical or moral impossibility will excuse us from not having done so, or from not having repaired the injustice we have done, a sinner is, therefore, bound to repair, as much as in him lies, the injustice he has done to God ; and nothing but a physical or moral incapability, will excuse him for not having done so.

That the Church, in all ages from the Apostles' time down to ours, was persuaded, and taught the necessity of satisfying God, for sin committed after baptism is evident.

First—From the obligations laid on Priests, of always imposing in the confessional a penance for sins, and a penance which should be always proportioned to the number, the greatness, and the enormity of sins.

Secondly—From the manner the Church behaved to dying sinners ; for those sinners, when in danger of death, were always absolved ; but if they afterwards recovered, they were absolutely obliged to go through the usual penance for their sins, notwithstanding the absolution they had received before, while sick : and these penances were not easy and gentle, but severe and long penances. The Church always entertained a great horror of sin committed after baptism, because a sinner thereby profaned the sanctity of a sacrament, and violated the solemn promise he made to God in baptism. Impressed with these sentiments, the Church wished to

convey to all others the same ideas she entertained herself of the grievousness of sins committed after baptism. This, among other reasons, induced her to impose on such sinners, long, severe, and heavy penances; for nothing conveys a clearer idea of the greatness of a disorder, than the great difficulty of its cure. St. Augustine says, "People never dread much a disorder that is easily cured." Hence, the Church hoped to restrain people within the bounds of duty, by imposing severe penalties on all who violated their obligations, and justly dreaded, that the facility of pardon would be an inducement to sin, as St. Ambrose declared.

Is satisfaction an essential part of penance?

To answer this question correctly, it must be observed, that there are two kinds of satisfaction; viz. intended satisfaction, and actual satisfaction. Intended, desired, or wished-for satisfaction, called by Divines, *satisfactio in volo*, is a sincere intention and desire of satisfying God's justice, and of performing due penance for our sins. Actual satisfaction is the real accomplishment of the penance imposed on us. This premised, I say, that the actual accomplishment or performance of our penance, is not absolutely and essentially required for the validity of the sacrament of penance. This is evident from the case of a dying person; for such a person validly receives the sacrament of penance, though he is not able to perform any satisfaction for his sins. The absolution of the Priest produces a remission of sin and sanctifying grace in the soul of a penitent truly contrite, before this penitent performs any sacramental satisfaction.

Hence, a penitent who is incapable of performing the penance imposed on him, or snatched away by a sudden death, is excusable before God for not having performed satisfaction, supposing always that he had a sincere desire of performing his penance. Actual satisfaction, therefore, is not essentially required for the validity of the sacrament.

But a desire, an intention, and a wish of performing sacramental satisfaction, and of repairing, as much as in our power lies, the injury done to God, by sin, is absolutely and essentially required for the validity of the sacrament of penance ; for true contrition necessarily comprises a firm purpose of observing all God's commandments ; but to repair the injury offered to God is certainly one of these commandments. Consequently, a desire and intention of satisfying God for sins committed, is absolutely necessary, in order to obtain remission of these sins.

In what sense is actual satisfaction necessary ?

From what has been before said, actual satisfaction is not necessary in order to obtain the remission of sin, or the remission of the eternal punishment due to sin ; but it is necessary, in order to obtain the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin ; for, according to the doctrine of the Council of Trent, the eternal punishment due to sin, is changed by the sacrament of penance, into a temporal punishment, and we satisfy for this temporal punishment, when we perform the proper penance imposed on us by our Confessors in the sacred tribunal. —Hence, Confessors are strictly obliged to im-

pose proper penances on their penitents, and in no case are Confessors exempt from this strict obligation, except in cases of physical or moral impossibility on the part of the penitents to perform any penance. For instance—if a person were just ready to expire; for the Confessor, sitting as judge, in the place of Jesus Christ, ought, in conformity to the laws of strict justice, oblige the penitent to repair the injury he has done to God, in grievously offending his Divine Majesty, and consequently to perform the penance enjoined for that purpose.

Is not all temporal punishment due to sin pardoned, when the sin itself is pardoned?

Some modern sectaries, in order not to admit the merit of good works, or the necessity of penance, or the existence of purgatory, or the benefit of indulgences, hold, that all punishment due to sin, is remitted, when the sin is remitted. But the Catholic Church holds, and always held, that, though sin, and the eternal punishment due to sin, be remitted, yet, ordinarily speaking, there still remains some temporal punishment for sin, which must be paid or satisfied for, because it is the will of God, that the punishment should be of longer duration than the crime; for if all punishment were remitted along with the sin, mankind would be inclined to look on sin as a trifling evil and consequently, commit it more easily. This is the reasoning of St. Augustine.

The doctrine of the Catholic Church is easily proved from Scripture and Holy Fathers.

In the 14th chap. of Numbers we read, that Moses had obtained from God the pardon of the

sin of the Israelites, who had murmured against God. Yet all these people, few excepted, were punished by death.

Moses and Aaron were deprived of ever entering the Land of Promise, because they did not give God due glory in the presence of the Israelites. And will any one say, that God did not pardon them this sin?

Mary, Moses' sister, murmured against Moses. God pardoned her at the request of Moses; yet he struck her with a frightful leprosy.

The Prophet Nathan, assured David from God, that his adultery and murder were pardoned him; yet David owed a temporal punishment for these crimes. Of this the Prophet warned him in the following words:—

“The Lord has transferred your sin; you shall not die for it: but, as you have been the cause, “that the enemies of the Lord have blasphemed “against him, your son shall die.”

St. Gregory the Great says, that David merited, by the humble confession of his sins, to hear from the Prophet's mouth that God had pardoned him his sins; yet, he was obliged afterwards, to undergo several temporal punishments for these very sins. This Holy Pope concludes with these remarkable words—“That God never forgives any sin without inflicting some punishment for it.”

St. Augustine—“You shew mercy O Lord, to him who confesses his sin, but on this condition alone, that he will punish himself;” and thus justice and mercy will be both satisfied. Mercy, because sin is pardoned; and justice, because sin is punished. A sinner who refuses to sub-

mit to the law of God, must necessarily suffer punishment for his disobedience. When a man recedes from the order of mercy he must unavoidably fall under the order of justice. Now, the order of justice requires, that God should punish sin in the other life by eternal torments, or that a sinner should punish sin here by some temporal satisfactions.

A man, when he sins, indulges himself in some criminal and forbidden pleasure. Now as contraries are only cured by contraries, it follows, that such a man, to repair the injury he has hereby done to God, and to himself, must forego afterwards innocent pleasures, on account of having indulged himself in guilty ones: it follows, that he must submit to some temporal punishment in order to avoid those that are eternal: it also follows, that he must submit to the rigours of penance, for having gratified his inordinate inclinations to pleasure. It was this consideration that made Tertullian and St. Pacian both declare, that a Christian who had ever sinned, should never forget doing penance for his sins, in order to appease the wrath of God, and to satisfy his justice.

Has not Christ abundantly satisfied for our sins, and does not his satisfactions exempt us from satisfying, &c. ?

It is certain that the satisfaction which our Saviour offered to his Father for us has been most eminently perfect, and superabundantly sufficient, according to all the rules of the most strict and rigorous justice, to satisfy for the sins of all mankind. However, to effect this for each individual, it must be applied to each individual;

for, as St. Pacian says, "The blood of Christ does not cure, if it be not drank."

Secondly—If the satisfactions of Christ were not applied to us, and if our satisfactions were separated from the satisfactions of Christ, there could be no kind of proportion between our satisfaction and our sins. Nay, the satisfactions of all the men in the world, could not satisfy adequately for one mortal sin; for, as mortal sin contains an infinite malice, no satisfaction could adequately compensate for it, but the satisfaction of a God man, because his satisfaction alone is infinite. When, therefore, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ is applied to us in the sacrament of penance, it is then the satisfaction of Jesus Christ which stamps our satisfactions with any value or merit, and renders them acceptable at the throne of mercy. The satisfaction of Jesus Christ is particularly applied to us, in the sacraments of baptism and penance. In baptism, both the guilt and punishment are entirely remitted to us; but in the sacrament of penance, God has thought proper to change the eternal into a temporal punishment; for the justice of God requires, that those who received, with so much facility, the pardon of all sin, in baptism, and afterwards violate the solemn promises they had made there, should be treated with more rigour, and should be obliged to suffer some punishment, in order to appease the anger of God, and to repair the injury they offered him by sinning. Hence, the infinite satisfaction which Jesus Christ offered for man, will never excuse nor dispense a man, from doing his best, to satisfy for his sins himself: and, indeed, this obli-

gation, which a man is under, of satisfying for his sins, is truly useful and highly salutary to man; for, take this salutary restraint away, and there would be every reason to apprehend, that then man would easily abuse the facility of obtaining pardon. When he would be easily and quickly freed from sin, and from every punishment due to sin, he would soon abandon himself to a foolish and presumptuous confidence, that God would always readily pardon all his crimes.

What are the beneficial effects to be derived from satisfactory works?

These are pointed out to us by the Council of Trent, session 14. *First*—"They recall a man from sin." A man who sees and feels that he must suffer punishment for his sins, though these sins are pardoned him, will, for the future, take greater precautions against sin, and also against the occasions of sin, which occur too frequently.

Secondly—"They are a salutary curb to restrain the impetuosity of our passions." Consequently prevent a penitent from relapsing again into sin.

Thirdly—"They make a man more attentive to his salvation." A penitent feeling all the weight of the punishment he suffers, considers carefully the unhappy state into which sin has plunged him, and, like a man just escaped from a shipwreck, bids an eternal farewell to ships and sea, as Tertullian expresses it.

Fourthly—"They cure the relics or remains of sin." The remains of sin are, certain spiritual languors of the soul, which prove great and dangerous obstacles to us in the road of virtue; such as, a disrelish to piety and repugnance to do

good works—an inordinate attachment to the things of this world. These remain in the soul after sin is effaced from it.

Fifthly—“They destroy our bad habits by the practice of the contrary virtues.” It was this that made St. Bernard call penance the punisher of our crimes and the nurse of virtues. The habit we contracted of sinning is forced at last to yield to the severity of penance, as St. Augustine remarks.

Sixthly—“They appease the wrath of God, and satisfy his justice.” For, as the Council of Trent says, “The Church has never yet discovered a surer method of averting all the effects of God’s wrath than by practising works of penance with a true spirit of contrition.” This we are taught by God’s own words in Jeremiah, “If this nation does penance, for all the evil I mentioned, against, I shall repent also, and no longer will do all the mischief I intended doing against her.”

Seventhly—“They produce in us a conformity of life, or a resemblance of Jesus Christ.” The whole life of our Saviour was chiefly made up of labours and sufferings. If we wish to live and reign with him hereafter, we must endeavour, while in this life, to copy this divine original: we must endeavour to resemble him; and consequently, we must endeavour to lead a life of mortification and penance: for, as St. Paul says, If we are dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him. This has led St. Leo to say—There is a certain and sure hope of the promised beatitude, where there is a participation of the sufferings of the Lord.

Eighthly and Lastly—They remit the temporal punishment due to sin, and procure special graces to prevent us from relapsing into sin.

Which are the ordinary sacramental satisfactions imposed on penitents?

The sacramental satisfactions imposed on penitents are, and should be, works agreeable to God. They should be likewise painful and humiliating to man; for, as a sinner indulged himself in some criminal gratification by committing sin, so it is but bare justice, that to expiate this sin and to satisfy God, he should submit to some pain and trouble: and as by daring to sin against God he wished to raise himself above the condition of a creature, so it is but just, that for his pride and disobedience, he should submit to some humiliations. Both these are clearly marked out in the Apocalypse: “Multiply his torments and his pains, in proportion as he indulged his pride and his pleasures.”

All sacramental satisfactions may be reduced to, and classed under, three general heads, viz. prayer, fasting, and alms-deeds. The angel Raphael, said to Tobias, “Prayer, accompanied with fasting and alms, is better than to heap up gold and treasure.”

What is meant by these, and first by prayer?

By prayer is meant all kinds of mental and vocal prayers. *Secondly*—The offering of all our actions, works and labours to God. *Thirdly*—Offering to God all the miseries and calamities sent to us by Divine Providence in this life, such as poverty, sickness and persecutions; for the Council of Trent clearly teaches, that all kinds of afflictions contribute greatly to satisfy for our

sins, if we accept them as coming from the hands of God—if we bear them with patience, and with conformity to the divine will—and if we offer them up as a satisfaction for our sins, in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ ; for, though all these afflictions happen to us independently of our own will, and seem thereby to be no way in our power, still they are, in some sense, in our power, because we can, assisted by grace, support them with patience, accept them as a satisfaction for our sins, offer them to God with that intention, and, consequently, we can make them truly meritorious. *Fourthly*—By prayer, also, are meant all kinds of ejaculations and aspirations to God, assisting at mass, sermons, instructions, pious reading, and pilgrimages.

Fasting means not only abstaining from meat and corporal nourishment, but signifies also all kinds of corporal austerities and mortifications, such as eating dry bread ; making use of no liquid but water ; abstaining from all sweet-meats, dainties, and delicacies ; depriving a person's self of some lawful pleasures that he could sometimes enjoy, from seeing, hearing and smelling ; wearing hair shirts or cinctures ; taking the discipline ; lying on the bare ground, or on a hard bed ; kneeling a long time before a crucifix, with the body bent towards the ground ; not wearing rich clothes : keeping away from feasts and gaieties, or making a retreat. To these external mortifications may be added interior mortifications, such as renouncing a person's will, submitting to the will of another, and bearing, for the love of God, all the injuries, confusions, and contempts that befall us.

By alms-deeds are meant all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, such as giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, lodging to those who want it, to visit prisoners and the sick, to dress the wounded, to ransom captives, and to bury the dead. The spiritual ones are, to instruct the ignorant, to correct a sinner, to comfort the afflicted, to give advice to those who want it, to protect those who are persecuted unjustly, to pardon injuries, to pray for the living and the dead, and for our enemies. When these spiritual and corporal works of mercy are performed with a true spirit of charity, they are extremely efficacious in satisfying for our sins, and in obtaining mercy from God.

What penance should a Confessor lay on a penitent?

A Confessor should not lay the same penance promiscuously and indifferently on every person, nor for every kind of sin. As different sins are of different enormity, and as the state and condition of those who commit them are likewise different, it follows clearly that penances, in order to be justly proportioned, should be very different one from the other. However, all penances imposed should be always some of the satisfactory works already mentioned.

St. Francis of Sales advises Confessors not to charge their penitents with too great a variety of different vocal prayers, nor too great a quantity of different satisfactory works; because in these cases the penitents are either very apt to forget them, or more engaged in thinking what works they are to do than attentive to do them as well as they ought.

St. Charles Borromeo likewise advises Confessors not to lay too long penances on their penitents, and says that it would be better to lay some penance on a sinner which he would be bound to fulfil immediately, in case he relapsed into sin; for instance, a curser or swearer should be enjoined, immediately after he would have cursed or sworn to kiss the ground, to give some alms to the poor, or say some short prayer.

Penances contrary to the sins committed, appear to be the best and most suitable, because they are more efficacious, and better calculated to eradicate the contrary bad habits. St. Charles advises the following:—

First—For sins of impurity—fasting, watching, pilgrimaging, ciliciums, disciplines, lying on the ground, or on a hard bed, and abstaining from strong liquors; for, as they offended God by indulging their bodies in criminal pleasures, it is just and fitting that the same bodies should be punished by mortifications.

For sins of avarice—such as injustice in dealing, or cheating, or defrauding, or usury, the proper penances, are, *first*, restitution of all unjust gain; *secondly*, large and liberal alms in proportion to a man's property. If those who had stolen from, or defrauded others, have neither property enough to make restitution, or to give alms, they should be obliged to work harder and more diligently than ordinarily, in order to be enabled, thereby, to give greater alms to the poor. This is the advice of St. Paul, in his Epistle to Ephesians: “Let him who stole do so no more, but let him employ himself in some manual labour, in order to have wherewithal to give to

the poor." For sins of pride prayers are the best penance ; a sinner humbling himself before God in prayer obtains from him the necessary graces to conquer pride.

Sinners ignorant of the doctrine and duties of Christianity should be bound to assist at all the sermons and public instructions given in the chapel, read books of instruction, or hear them read, and should likewise be enjoined to make all those under their care to do the same.

Those who have little or no devotion should be obliged to assist frequently at the chapel, to say much prayers, and to confess often.

Cursers and swearers should be bound to severe penances ; for instance, they should be bound to keep silence, except when there is some necessity for speaking, and should bear humbly with reproaches and unjust accusations, without attempting to justify themselves ; they should be bound to say the usual morning and night prayers, and to say some short prayers four or five times a day besides, and to kiss the ground each time after prayer. If at any time after they should happen to curse, they should be bound to retract what they had said immediately, beg God's pardon, and the pardon of any one who heard them, in order to repair the scandal they gave by their sin, and lastly, they should be bound to give something to the poor each time they cursed or swore.

The penance for those who work on Sundays and holydays, through avarice, is to oblige them to give to the poor at least as much as they have gained. To those who lose mass on these days, to assist at the offices of the church, sermons,

instructions, and more masses than one during some Sundays.

To drunkards—fasting two days for an act of drunkenness, to go to no ale-house for a certain time, to drink no spirits, and only such a quantity of liquid, for a limited time, as would be necessary or useful to his health.

To those who have, or had, enmities to others—*First*, to be reconciled before absolution; *secondly*, to pray, night and day, for a certain time, for the spiritual and temporal prosperity of those they had an enmity with, and to contribute to their prosperity as much as in their power lies.

Is a penitent obliged to accept the penance imposed on him by his Confessor?

The penitent is absolutely obliged to accept the penance imposed by a Confessor, except the penance be really impracticable to the penitent, or except it is morally impossible for the penitent to perform it; for the confessor is not obliged to conform himself to the will of the penitent, but the penitent, on the contrary, is obliged to submit his will to his Confessor; for a Confessor acts as judge in the tribunal of confession—he pronounces sentence in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ; he does not barely advise the penitent to perform the penance, but he commands him to do so. Now a Confessor has not only power of loosing from sin by absolution, but he has also the power of binding, which power he exerts by imposing proper penances, as the Council of Trent teaches us.

St. Cyprian says, “He who performs the penance imposed on him, and patiently and

humbly obeys the commandments of God and his priests, draws down the mercy of God on himself by this submission, and by these good works." Hence it is easy to conclude, that the very nature and condition of a Confessor and penitent, clearly point out the necessity the penitent is under of accepting the penance imposed by a Confessor. A penitent, therefore, who would refuse a reasonable penance, is not properly disposed to receive absolution, because he is, by this obstinacy, in the state of mortal sin. It would be much better, in such a case, to send him off, though dissatisfied, without absolution, than to deceive him grievously, by giving him a false absolution. And surely, any rational man should do as much, for the curing of his soul, as for the curing of his body ;—now, no rational man would refuse the most bitter, or the most nauseous remedy, to recover or to preserve his health and life. Why should he, then, refuse to receive the remedies that are necessary for the cure of his soul, though these remedies should be disagreeable or bitter ?

I will own, indeed, that if a Confessor imprudently imposed on his penitent a penance either impracticable, or morally impossible, a penitent may remonstrate to his Confessor, and explain to him the reasons why he could not perform such a penance. For instance : a poor man is ordered to give great alms, which it is not in his power to give ; an old man is ordered to perform a laborious and distant pilgrimage. In these or similar cases a penitent is allowed to expostulate with his Confessor about the impracticability of such penances.

What do you say to a penitent who wishes to defer any satisfaction till he goes to purgatory?

A penitent who would be so disposed, would be very badly disposed to receive absolution or penance either. For the Council of Trent declares, "That the life of a Christian on earth ought to be a continual penance." Though actual satisfaction is not essentially necessary to constitute the Sacrament of Penance, still, however, a desire of satisfying God, and of repairing the injury done him, by sin, is essentially necessary in this sacrament; because no contrition can be true or sincere without including this desire. Now a person who could satisfy God in this world, and will not, but puts it off to purgatory, has not a sincere desire of satisfying God, because he does not do it when he could do it—consequently, he has no true contrition. Hence a person who defers making satisfaction for his sins till he goes to purgatory, will, in all probability, be obliged to make satisfaction for them in hell, and not in purgatory.

Is a penitent obliged to fulfil the penance which he has accepted?

The Council of Lateran has defined, in precise and formal terms, "that a penitent is strictly obliged to perform the penance imposed on him." Sinners who wish to obtain pardon of God, and to be reconciled to him, ought not only to detest their sins and confess them, but are bound also to appease his wrath and satisfy his justice by works of penance. Hence David, when he was doing penance for his sins, said, "That he covered himself with sackcloth, and humbled himself by fasting.

This obligation is likewise easily inferred from the Council of Trent. The Council, in the 14th session, orders all Confessors to impose penances justly proportioned to the number and enormity of sins confessed, and to the state, condition, and strength of the penitent; otherwise Confessors would participate and become accomplices in the crimes of their penitents. Now, such an injunction from the Council, would be nugatory, if penitents were not strictly obliged to perform the penances imposed on them, and the menaces held out there, would be likewise absurd and nugatory; for, what matter whether the penances were strictly proportioned or not, if the penitents were not obliged to perform them? And, indeed, to consider properly the rules of life laid down for mankind in the gospel, we must say, that there is no small degree of folly and injustice in any sinner who would wish to do little or no penance, and would hope, at the same time, to be pardoned all his sins; for this would, in reality, be wishing to be highly rewarded without doing any thing to merit it. But let us not deceive ourselves; God has absolutely decreed that he will never grant a gratuitous pardon to any sin committed after baptism. "This pardon," says Tertullian, "must be purchased, and penance is the only coin that can purchase it."

Is it a sin not to perform the penance enjoined?

If a person voluntarily and without sufficient reason, omits or neglects to perform any penance imposed and accepted, he sins mortally; for, by this omission or neglect he insults God, not satisfying his justice—he insults the Church, by disobeying its minister—and he deprives a sacra-

ment of its due perfection, by mutilating one of its integral parts. But if he omit only a small part of his penance, especially, if the penance were imposed only for venial sins, the sin would be then only venial, except it was accompanied with a voluntarily and formal contempt; likewise, if the omission happened through forgetfulness, it would be only a venial sin, except this forgetfulness proceeded from having neglected or delayed too long a time to perform the penance. But it should be remarked, that in every case of forgetfulness, let it proceed from what cause it may, the penance imposed, must be afterwards performed when we think of it; for, if a prudent Confessor find that any one, without a sufficient reason, had omitted performing his penance, he will, doubtless, dismiss that person without absolution, until he perform his penance; because there is a well grounded presumption against any penitent who has not performed his penance, that he is not properly disposed to receive absolution, and the Confessor has every just reason to judge that the penitent will equally neglect his future penances as he did the past.

The penitent is obliged to perform, himself, the penance enjoined on him; for, the obligation of satisfaction is as personal as contrition and confession; and surely no one will say that another person's confession or contrition could supply the want of mine. The contradictory doctrine was condemned by Pope Alexander VII. Hence, no Confessor could permit his penitent to get his penance performed by any other person for him. This is obviously just—for how could the penance performed by any one else

for me, have the same advantages as the penance I would perform myself? for the penance performed by any other person would be no punishment to me—they would not correct my evil habits, nor preserve me from relapsing again into my former sins.

Should the penance be performed immediately?

No one should delay to perform his penance, without sufficient reason for doing so. He should perform it as soon as convenient: at least within the time prescribed to him by his Confessor—*first*, in order to perform it in a state of grace, before he would relapse again into sin—*secondly*, for fear of forgetting it, or of not performing it in this life—*thirdly*, in order to avoid committing sin. For a delay of performing penance is a sin greater or less, in proportion as the delay is great or small.

A penance performed by a person in the state of mortal sin, or who has an affection or attachment to mortal sin, cannot be truly satisfactory in the eyes of God, nor diminish the punishment due to sins before committed; or it is a mockery of God to do penance, and ask pardon for a sin, which a person still loves, and is resolved still to commit. It is a truth, admitted by all divines, and expressly taught by St. Thomas, that no satisfaction can appease the wrath of God, and remit the punishment due to sin, but a satisfaction agreeable and acceptable to God. Now, surely, any work done in the state of mortal sin, and with an affection to mortal sin, cannot be agreeable or acceptable to God; because such a work necessarily involves a formal contempt of his Divine

Majesty ; besides, according to the catechism of the Council of Trent, a man, to make satisfaction to God, must be a just man, a friend of God. A sinner cannot be deemed a just man, and a friend to God, and consequently, while in that state, cannot be capable to make proper satisfaction to God.

What is meant by absolution ?

By absolution is meant the sentence by which a Priest remits to penitents their sins, by pronouncing over them these words : " I absolve you, &c." These words, according to the Councils of Florence and Trent, constitute the true form of the Sacrament of penance, and clearly signify the effect of this sacrament, which is a remission of sin.

The Council of Trent has likewise defined, that this absolution is a judicial act, and not a mere simple ministry, by which a Priest declares that the sins of the penitent are forgiven.

This truth was likewise taught us by our Saviour, when he compared his own mission with the mission he gave his Apostles. He said to the Apostles, before he gave them the power of forgiving sins : " As my father sent me, so I send ye," and then he conferred on them that power. Now, it is certain, that our Saviour was sent by his father, not barely with a power of declaring sins forgiven, but with a real power of actually forgiving sins. He has, consequently, given to his Apostles, and to their successors, the real power of forgiving sins.

The Holy Fathers, in all ages of the Church, have always taught this doctrine. In a matter so clear, and already proved at sufficient length, it

cannot be necessary how to adduce many proofs ; I shall only quote two :—

St. Chrysostom says, “ that the Priests of the New Law not only declare that the souls of the faithful are cleansed from all filth, but that they actually purify and cleanse their souls.”

St. Ambrose says, “ that Priests have the same power of forgiving sins, in the Sacrament of Penance, that they have in the Sacrament of Baptism.” And who will dispute that Priests have not a power of forgiving sins in the sacrament of baptism ?

Can every Priest absolve a sinner from his sins ?

Every Priest, when he is ordained, receives a power to consecrate the body and blood of Jesus Christ ; he likewise receives a power to absolve the faithful from their sins. This power is called the power of order.

There is another power called the power of jurisdiction : the power of jurisdiction is the authority which any person possesses over another, to govern him, to judge him, and to punish him. This power of jurisdiction in the sacrament of penance, is the authority which Priests possess over the consciences of the faithful, in the tribunal of confession.

This premised, I say, that every Priest has the power of order : this power he received in ordination, and is inseparable from his character. But every Priest has not the power of jurisdiction ; that is, every Priest has not the power of hearing the confessions of the faithful, and of absolving them from their sins. This power of jurisdiction may be entirely refused to a Priest, or taken away from him ; it is greater or lesser in

some Priests than it is in others ; it may be augmented or diminished according to the will of superiors.

Hence, to absolve the faithful, except in the article of death, it is not sufficient, barely, to be a Priest ; it is further required that this Priest should receive jurisdiction to do so—for, without this jurisdiction, according to the Council of Trent, his **absolution** would be null and void. **Absolution** is a judicial act, by which the Priest, in quality of judge, pronounces pardon. Now, as no one validly acquits or pardons another, except he has some authority over that person ; hence a Priest, to pardon any penitent validly, must have some authority over that penitent ; by his ordination he has no authority over any one. This authority he can only have when the Church communicates to him the power of jurisdiction ; therefore, jurisdiction is necessary.

Should Priests sometimes defer giving absolution to some penitents ?

Priests are not absolute masters of the Sacrament of Penance : nor can they, at their will and pleasure, give absolution indiscriminately to every one who asks it ; they are the ministers of Jesus Christ and the dispensers of his graces. Hence, they can give absolution to no penitent but to those whose dispositions entitle them to receive it ; therefore, when a Priest has just reasons to doubt of the good dispositions of a penitent, he ought ever to defer the absolution till he sees this penitent better disposed, and better prepared to receive the sacrament. Priests are obliged to be faithful ministers ; they must give a strict account of their administration to

the Lord, and will be severely punished, if they throw away the bread of children to the dogs. To them the blood of Christ is entrusted ; they ought, therefore, never to give it to those who are unworthy of it—to those who would profane and trample it under foot. “ Do not give,” says Christ, “ holy things to dogs, nor throw pearls to swine.” Hence, the Roman Ritual strictly charges Priests, never to absolve a man who is unworthy of absolution.

Finally, Priests are justly deemed the physicians of the soul ; now, skilful physicians never act precipitately—they wait patiently for a proper time to apply their remedies ; they well know that to act otherwise would rather obstruct than promote a cure. A Priest should behave in the same manner ; he should never give a precipitate absolution to any one, and much less should he give an immediate absolution to all, without distinction of persons and dispositions ; for such absolutions, far from being useful to penitents, eventually turn out to be their ruin and destruction ; for penitents are thereby prevented from applying to God by reiterated prayers ; their regrets for having offended God cease too soon ; a lively sense and recollection of their past crimes too quickly pass away : their tears dry up too soon, and their thoughts are no longer employed how they might best appease the wrath of God by the sincerity of their penance. It was these reasons that made St. Cyprian inveigh so strongly against precipitate absolutions ; he calls these absolutions an unhappy peace, useless to him who receives it, but pernicious to him who gives it ; a cruel

indulgence, that puts cushions under the elbows of sinners, in order that they may commit crimes with greater ease; a fatal remedy, which, instead of curing the sick person, throws him into a fatal lethargy. He concludes by saying, "that a precipitate absolution, far from curing a penitent, really murders him."

Who are those that a Confessor should delay for a time, or entirely refuse absolving?

There are several reasons that justly authorise a Confessor for refusing or delaying the absolution to penitents, but they may be all reduced to the six following:—

First—When a penitent is ignorant of the principal mysteries of our faith, and of other things necessary for all Christians to know.

Secondly—When a person lives in enmity with any one, and refuses to be reconciled to him.

Thirdly—When a person has injured another in his property or reputation, and has not or is not willing to repair both, as much as in his power lies.

Fourthly—When a person is in the habit of any mortal sin.

Fifthly—When a person lives in the immediate occasion of mortal sin.

Sixthly—When a person does not show sufficient signs of true contrition for his sins.

Why should not a person be absolved who is ignorant of the principal mysteries of faith, &c.?

Because every Christian, who is come to the use of reason, is obliged to believe explicitly the principal mysteries of the Christian religion, and because he cannot be saved without that explicit faith. Now, to believe them he must know them.

Our Saviour says, in St. John, "that life everlasting consists in knowing the Father, who is our true God, and Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent." The Church was at all times so persuaded of this truth, that she never admitted any adult person to baptism, the first and most necessary of all the sacraments, till he was fully instructed in all the principal mysteries of faith; and likewise obliged children, by the mouths of their sponsors, to make a similar profession of faith, before they were baptized. Besides this profession, all the faithful, when they come to the use of reason, are absolutely obliged to know several other truths of Christianity, which they are bound to practice; and how can they practice them if they do not know them?

The necessity of this faith for the validity of absolution, cannot now be called into question by any Catholic, since Innocent XI condemned the following proposition, as erroneous and heretical: A man is capable of absolution, though ignorant of the mysteries of faith, and even though he should, through criminal negligence, be ignorant of the mysteries of the most Holy Trinity, and of the incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Hence, penitents who, through their own fault, are ignorant of the principal mysteries of their faith, and of other truths which the Church commands them to know, either because they have not been willing to be instructed, or have neglected to be instructed, are totally unworthy of absolution; for they are in a state of actual disobedience to the Church, and prove clearly, by their conduct, that they have very little zeal, or regard for their salvation.

The same conduct should be likewise observed towards parents, masters, and mistresses, who neglect to instruct, or to get instructed, their children and servants in the principal mysteries of faith, and in the other great truths of Christianity; they are worse than infidels, according to St. Paul; and St. Charles Borromeo, in his instructions, absolutely forbids Confessors to absolve such people.

Why should not a person be absolved who entertains enmity to his neighbour?

No Confessor can, in conscience, absolve any who retain in their hearts aversion or hatred to their neighbour, or who does not forgive all mankind every offence whatsoever, or who do not sincerely wish to be reconciled with their enemies. No Confessor can absolve any but true penitents; and can any one deem these true penitents, who refuse to obey the peremptory orders of Jesus Christ? For he has commanded in the clearest terms, that mankind should leave their offerings at the very steps of the altar, and go, and be reconciled with their enemies, before they would presume to make any offerings to him. And according to Gregory VII. in the canon law, "no one could perform a penance that could lead to salvation, unless he eradicates out of his heart every kind of enmity and hatred to mankind." Nothing, surely, can be more just than to refuse absolution to such people, while they retain in their hearts any rancour against their neighbour.

The Council of Arles proceeds much farther than merely denying absolution to such people, for it orders all, whose enmity and hatred are

notorious and public, to be excommunicated; unless they profess a sincere disposition of being mutually reconciled to one another.

The Fourth Council of Carthage, and the Council of Trosly, repelled from communion, and from making the usual offering, all those, who retained enmity in their hearts against any one; for, as the Council of Trosly says, he who asks pardon of God, and refuses, at the same time, to pardon his neighbour, far from obtaining what he prays for, will, on the contrary, draw down the curse of God on his own head.

If a penitent promises to be reconciled to his enemy, and protests that he retains no enmity against him or any body else, and if the enmity were not public and scandalous, such a Penitent could be received to sacraments immediately, supposing always that he was otherwise well disposed and prepared. But if this Penitent made such a protestation before, in a former confession, and took no steps or pains, after absolution, to be reconciled to his enemy, he should receive no absolution till reconciliation took place, or till he took the rational pains he should take to bring about a reconciliation.

If the enmity be public and scandalous, the guilty persons cannot be received to sacraments till they give public marks of reconciliation, such as mutual visits in public, mutual salutes, civilities, or some other external marks of reconciliation. These things they are bound to do, not only to comply with the gospel precept of loving their enemies, but to repair also the scandal they gave to the public—for public and scandalous sinners should not be received to

sacraments till they repair, as well as they can, the scandal they had given.

Why should not those be absolved who have the property of others?

There is nothing more peremptorily commanded, both in the Old and New Testaments than to make just restitution to every body. Hence, it follows, necessarily, that absolution cannot be given, to any one, who retains, unjustly, the property of another, and is not disposed to restore it, if in his power; nor to a person who is not willing to repair any injury he had done to his neighbour, either in his property or in his honour. Such a person has not the dispositions necessarily required for a valid absolution; on the contrary, he is in the state of mortal sin—for he perseveres in acting contrary to the express commandments of God, whereby we are ordered not to take the property of another unjustly, and if we have taken it, to restore it as soon as we possibly can. This led St. Augustine to declare, that he who has it in his power to restore the property of another, which he acquired unjustly, and does not restore it, in vain accuses himself of his sins, and testifies repentance for them. His penance is a false penance, and not a true one, for the order of true penance requires that restitution should be first made, if in a person's power to do so. Hence, the Roman Ritual, and the statutes of several dioceses, order Priests to absolve no person who has property unjustly acquired, till he restores it, if in his power to do so.

Actual restitution is not absolutely required before absolution, in every possible case; for,

according to the Council of Milan; if a Penitent had never before, in any former confession, promised restitution, and failed in the execution of this promise, without assigning sufficient reasons for doing so, he could then be absolved before actual restitution, by sincerely promising to make this necessary restitution as soon as he conveniently could. This is likewise the opinion of St. Francis de Sales.

Are sinners to be absolved immediately, who are in the habit of mortal sin?

It is a certain truth, and confirmed by the Council of Trent, 16th session, that a sinner truly converted to God, and justified by the grace of the sacrament, may relapse again into sin; because absolution does not convey to a converted sinner the gift of perseverance, nor does the grace he receives render him impec-
cable; for he retains still, in spite of this benefit and of this grace, the liberty of doing good or evil, and his natural inclination to evil is not de-
stroyed.

Though relapsing into sin, after absolution, be not a certain and incontestable proof that a penitent had not true contrition when he was absolved, as this relapse might proceed from the inconstancy of man, and the mutability of the human will, yet when a man, after confession, makes but feeble efforts to reform his conduct and amend his life—when he falls soon, and often, into the same sins, as before, a Confessor has well-founded reasons to apprehend that he was not sincerely converted, and that he had not the true contrition required, nor the firm purpose that was necessary for a real convers^{on}

to God; for, the Holy Fathers positively assert, that where there is no real amendment, there is no true penance. And St. Ambrose declares that true penance consists in lamenting our past sins, and in not committing again the sins we have before lamented.

Hence, a Confessor should defer giving absolution to a habitual sinner, till he can ascertain with sufficient security the sincerity of such a person's conversion. A Confessor should animate his Penitent to practice carefully penitential works, to fight courageously against his evil habits, and to destroy these habits by frequent acts of the virtue contrary to these evil habits. For it is a truth, well known by experience, that long and inveterate habits of sin, are not removed and cured, but with the greatest difficulty—*first*, because, according to St. Augustine, sins of habit, though great and horrid in themselves, are deemed by the perpetrator but light and trifling—*secondly*—because the ties which attach us to these sins can never be burst asunder without offering great violence to ourselves—and this, few are willing to do: length of time, and many remedies are necessary, before an effectual cure can be wrought, and the contrary good habits acquired. Hence, a Confessor should not be precipitate in absolving an habitual sinner.

How long should the absolution be deferred to habitual sinners?

It is impossible to prescribe any fixed time for such a delay, because different persons require different times—some more, some less. It belongs to the prudence of a Confessor to de-

termine the time, by considering the strength of the habit, the violence of inclination to sin it has caused, the number of acts committed, the length of time since the habit was contracted, the age, the understanding, and the disposition of the Penitent.

Secondly—A prudent Confessor will consider, that nothing can contribute more to make sinners continue still in their evil habits than a great facility of absolving them quickly; that nothing makes them slight more the works of penance, than too prompt a reconciliation; and, on the other hand, that a delay of absolution will make them enter more seriously into themselves—will make them feel the weight of their sins—will make them struggle more against their evil inclinations—and will make them prepare themselves better for the grace of reconciliation by prayers, by acts of contrition, and by other penitential works.

Thirdly—A prudent Confessor will not pay so scrupulous an attention to the length of time for delaying the absolution, as he will to the greatness of the compunction, to the sincerity of the contrition, and to the amendment of life in the Penitent. When a Confessor will discover these in his Penitent—when he will find that his Penitent complied faithfully with the advices received—that he avoided carefully the occasions that had made him formerly fall into sin—that he frequently resisted and conquered violent temptations—that he seldom fell into the same faults—that he immediately rose again, conceiving great sorrow for his sin, and performed penance for it, either imposed by himself, or prescribed

by his Confessor. When a prudent Confessor, I say, will find these in his Penitent, he will not then delay long to absolve the Penitent; for the Confessor has then every just reason to hope that his Penitent, thus disposed, when aided by the grace of the sacrament, will conquer all his evil habits, and eradicate them entirely.

Lastly—A prudent Confessor will strongly recommend to his Penitent to practice, carefully, the means which usually prevent a relapse into sin.

And first—To pray frequently and fervently that God would preserve him from sin. It is a great grace that preserves a sinner from relapsing into sin; this grace he cannot command; he must, therefore, pray for it.

Secondly—To avoid most carefully, the occasions of sin.

Thirdly—To fly idleness.

Fourthly—To watch and to mortify his senses and passions.

Fifthly—To frequent the sacraments, especially confession.

Sixthly—To watch peaceably over the wanderings of the imagination, and the suggestions of the passions, and to repel, quickly, temptations as they arise in the mind.

Seventhly—To practice such works of penance as will be marked out in a good rule of life, prescribed by a prudent director.

Eighthly—To read spiritual books every day with great punctuality, and not to quit to soon such books as treat of death, judgement, hell, heaven, and eternity.

Should a person be absolved who is not determined to quit the occasions of sin?

First it is necessary to explain what is meant by the occasions of sin:—We call occasions of sin all external things that cause us to sin, or excite us ordinarily to sin—such as certain things, certain companies, and certain places. We call an immediate occasion of sin, that which tempts us very strongly to sin, or which, so often causes us to sin, that, morally speaking, we will not avoid sinning until we avoid that occasion.

Occasions of sin are two-fold: the first kind are those things which, of themselves, and in their own nature, tempt to sin—such as reading immodest books, or gazing at immodest pictures. The second kind are those which, in themselves, and of their own nature, do not tempt to sin, but accidentally tempt some persons, on account of some dispositions, either natural or acquired by habit. These occasions are called relative occasions because they are only occasions to some persons, and not ordinarily to all. When it is known, from past experience, that such occasions, have caused such persons to fall frequently into sin, then there is every just reason to judge, that such persons, still frequenting such occasions, will relapse again into sin, and consequently, these relative occasions, may be deemed immediate occasions of sin to such persons: for instance—frequenting drinking companies, to a man liable to commit excess; play, to a man who is accustomed to curse, swear, or blaspheme when he loses, &c.

It should be further remarked, that there are some occasions which may be easily avoided; such as ale-houses by a drunkard—gaming-houses by a gamester;—and that there are

other occasions of sin which cannot be avoided, but with great difficulty, or great inconvenience—such as the company of a wife or husband, who, by their tempers and dispositions, frequently cause each other to sin.

Every one is absolutely obliged to avoid every immediate occasion, if in his power to do so, because every one being strictly obliged to avoid sin, should, consequently, avoid every thing that would lead to sin. This is a sacrifice we owe to God, and which we must pay, let it cost us what it will. Jesus Christ, to preclude every excuse we could allege, positively orders us to pay no attention to any inconvenience, distress, or damage we might suffer by such a separation: “If your right eye scandalize you,” says he, in the 5th chapter of St. Matthew, “pluck it out and cast it far from you: if your right hand be a subject of scandal to you, cut it off and throw it from you.” The meaning of these words, according to St. Chrysostom, is, “That if a person be as useful to you as the eye that guides you, or the hand that serves you, yet, if that person be to you an immediate occasion of sin, you must quit him and cast him from you.” The terms our Saviour makes use of, *plucking out* and *cutting off*, clearly denote a great separation—an entire separation from such persons—whatever pains it may cost us, whatever violence we offer thereby to our inclinations. Hence it is, that the Roman Ritual orders, and all Divines agree, that no Penitent should be absolved who would not avoid an immediate occasion of sin, if it were in his power to do so, whether this thing would be an immediate occasion, either absolutely or

relatively, to that person. A little reflection should satisfy any rational man how just such a prohibition is—for no Priest should absolve any one who does not sincerely repent of his sins. Now, according to the Council of Lateran, no man can be a true Penitent, who lives in the immediate occasion of sin. Therefore it is necessary to avoid immediate occasions of sin.

Secondly—He who remains in the immediate occasion of sin, which he could easily avoid, has neither the true sorrow for past sins, nor the firm purpose of avoiding sin, for the future ; for, far from having the firm purpose of sinning no more, he rather appears resolved to sin ; he is resolved to frequent the occasions of sin, which to him is the cause of sin—he therefore is resolved to sin ; for he that wills the cause wills the effect. Again—if he were really sorry for having sinned, how could he remain in the immediate occasion of sin, and which is inseparably connected with sin ? He is thereby exposed to the immediate danger of sin, and consequently, according to Ecclesiasticus will fall into sin—for “He that loveth the danger shall *perish* therein.” Hence it is, that it can be said with truth, that any one who lives in the immediate occasion of sin, should be classed with those people who are not seriously or sincerely resolved to avoid sin, but rather wish to fall into it.

Should frequent confession be strongly recommended to the faithful ?

Frequent confession should be strongly recommended to all who are actuated by proper principles and proper motives. Hence, any person who sincerely wishes to have his soul purified from all its past corruption—or who has a sincere

desire of saving his soul—or who wishes to advance in perfection—or who wishes to derive strength from this sacrament, in order to resist his passions and conquer his weakness—or who wishes to procure the love of God, or persevere in the love of God—or who wishes, by means of the grace received in the sacrament, to conquer the devil, the world, and himself—in a word, any one who is guided by any of these principles, or prompted by any of these laudable motives, should be strongly urged to frequent the Sacrament of Penance. A sure rule for such people to follow is, the necessity they have for the sacrament, and the benefit they derive from it.

On the other hand, any person who would frequent this sacrament through custom or habit only, or through hypocrisy, human respect, or interest, should be entirely discouraged and repelled with horror from frequenting this sacrament, through motives so base and execrable. We can never sufficiently deplore such an abuse, which changes the most salutary remedy into the most deadly poison, and which, instead of curing the Penitent, and recovering him to a life of grace, plunges him still deeper into a spiritual death, by his repeated sacrileges.

What are the good effects of frequent confession well made?

In speaking of the good effects of frequent confession, well made, I mean only to speak of the future advantages such confessions will produce for the soul. This premised, I say, that frequent confession is one of the best preservatives which religion furnishes us with, in order to prevent relapsing into sin.

First—Because we acquire, thereby, a greater

and a more particular knowledge of ourselves; *secondly*—because we conceive, thereby, more lively and more bitter regrets for our sins; *thirdly*—because we form, thereby, resolutions more sincere and more suitable to our state; and *fourthly*—because we receive, thereby, graces more abundant and more efficacious.

First—It is morally impossible that any true Christian, who exactly and frequently frequents the Sacrament of Penance, should not acquire, thereby, greater and more particular knowledge of God and his infinite perfections—of sin and its enormity—of his own heart and its different passions; and a knowledge of these when succoured by grace, will contribute greatly to secure him from relapsing into sin. For he must acquire this knowledge of God and his perfections, because he is under the happy necessity of reflecting more seriously and more frequently on them, by approaching often to the tribunal of confession. Sometimes reflecting on the justice of God, terrible in its punishments and liberal in its rewards, his soul is filled with fear and hope, diffused there by the Holy Ghost. And though these salutary sentiments do not eradicate from the soul its vicious inclinations, yet they certainly eradicate from the heart all attachment to sin, and all desires of relapsing into it; because God powerfully helps on the efforts we make to comply with his grace. Other times he reflects on the greatness and majesty of God, before whom all creatures appear nothing, or less than nothing—on that boundless power which created us and preserve us, and who gave us both existence and life to

know him, to serve him; to love him, and to glorify him—on that goodness, truly God-like, which has so profusely bestowed on us so many natural and supernatural gifts and blessings—on that invincible patience which our constant ingratitude and infidelities could never shake or alter—on that mercy which was so often offered to us, so often abused, so often rejected, and which is still neither exhausted nor tired—on that great sanctity, which is so irreconcileable with sin, that, to expiate sin, it was necessary that the Son of God should die, and die ignominiously on the cross. These reflections, often reiterated, not only fill the soul with a more perfect knowledge of the perfections of God, but give also a more particular and a more distinct knowledge of sin and of its great enormity; for a sinner then clearly sees and feels how grievously he erred, by despising and forgetting such sovereign grandeur—by revolting against such infinite Power—by being ungrateful to so tender and so generous a Father—by being so indifferent with regard to so much justice and mercy—by monstrously preferring worldly laws to the divine laws, the love of creatures to the love of the Creator; a sinner will then be filled with indignation against his own baseness—will conceive a greater horror of sin, and make firmer resolutions of never offending again, a God so great, so holy, so loving, so powerful, and so merciful.

A Penitent must likewise acquire a greater knowledge of his own heart and of its passions; for by going frequently to confession he must frequently examine his heart, and deeply sound its inclinations and passions; and it is certain

that the more we analyze our hearts, their inclinations and their passions, the more we will find all within us ever ready, ever disposed to revolt against God, against his holy will, against his holy laws. This knowledge will flash conviction on any thinking mind, that every one is strictly bound to have great diffidence in himself, on account of his weakness—that every one should greatly dread his sensuality, his pride, and his sensibility—that every one should be always on his guard against the vivacity of his desires, his affections, and his aversions—that every one should quickly extinguish the smallest sparks of the inordinate passions, whenever they begin to be kindled in the soul—and, finally, that every one should be most attentively on the watch against his predominant passions, which have hitherto been the source of his so often falling off from God, and will be in future the cause of his relapsing into sin, unless carefully guarded, against, and courageously subdued.

How does a person, by frequent confession, acquire a more lively contrition?

A person, by frequent confession, acquires, as has been just said, a more particular, and a more distinct knowledge of God's perfections, and of the enormity of sin; now, it is very difficult to conceive how a man could have this knowledge, without being penetrated with a lively contrition for having offended God by sin. He could then justly say to himself, I now know, better than I ever did before, all my sins—all my iniquities: formerly, when I confessed but seldom, I was imperfectly acquainted with the enormity of my sins, either with regard to God, whom I

insulted by them, or with regard to myself, who committed them. But since, by the particular mercy of God, I began to practice frequent confession, the necessity I have been under, of thinking more seriously, and more frequently of my sins, has made me deeply feel the weight of my grievous crimes; I no longer seek to conceal them from myself; I see, I know, I feel, the injustice, the ingratitude, the enormity of them. In what fatal blindness have I spent so many years of my life! The more I think of this, the more it harrows up my soul with an awful sorrow. Can I ever sufficiently deplore so many years spent in the commission of sin and in the hatred of God? For what was then wanting in sin, to make it detestable, or what was wanting in you, my God, to make you amiable?

Every one sees that these, or similar reflections, made as they should be made, will never fail to excite a lively contrition.

How does frequent confession produce better resolutions?

From what has been just said, frequent confession will produce a more lively contrition, for sin: now, in proportion to our contrition, our resolutions will be more firm; for, a man who has this lively contrition, will be ever impelled not only to avoid sin for the future, but even to avoid every occasion of sin, and to repair, as much as in his power, every bad effect that followed from his sin. The experience of all true penitents places this truth beyond doubt or exception. A man deeply penetrated with his ingratitude to the best of fathers, and with

his rebellion against the best of masters, will never be satisfied with forming vague projects, or with making general resolutions against sin. Under a necessity of frequently reviewing his faults and his infidelities, he clearly discovers the sources whence these faults spring, and filled with true contrition for them, he makes particular and suitable resolutions to avoid not only these faults, but the causes of them: for instance—a true Penitent knows from experience, that by frequenting such a place, or such a company, he falls into some intemperance, or into some detraction;—filled with true sorrow for these faults, he not only resolves never to be guilty again of intemperance, or detraction, but he particularly resolves to avoid that place, or that company, which were to him, the occasions of these faults;—and, as he well knows, that merely resolving against sin, or the occasions of sin, will never secure him from relapsing into it; if he do not make proper use of the other means by which God ordinarily communicates his graces: hence he also resolves to meditate regularly, to pray frequently, to read good books, to frequent the sacraments, to discharge the duties of his station, to give alms, and to practice all the good works that lie in his power. By thus resolving, and thus acting, a Penitent not only repairs his past faults and their bad effects, but he effectually prevents any relapse into the same faults, and perseveres in a virtuous life.

How does a man, by frequent confession, acquire great graces?

It is an uncontested truth, that our merciful God, never refuses grace to any one who asks it,

who seeks it, and who makes use of the means that religion prescribes to obtain it; and, it is likewise a truth, equally certain, that there are certain occasions, in which God pours forth his treasures more liberally than in others, and that it is by the sacraments that he principally conveys to us the most precious effects of his boundless mercy; hence it must be admitted, as a necessary consequence, that any one who frequents the Sacrament of Penance with due dispositions, must there receive very great graces.

First—He receives sanctifying grace, which is common to the Sacrament of Penance, and to every other sacrament, when well received; for it is an article of faith, that by the Sacrament of Penance our sins are forgiven us, that we are reconciled to God, that we are restored again to his favour, and that from objects of his hatred we become objects of his love.

Secondly—He receives sacramental grace—that is, the grace peculiar to this sacrament—a grace given to preserve us from sin for the future; and, consequently, we receive grace to fortify us against the occasions of sin, against the natural inclination we have to sin, against the bad habits we contracted by sin, against our heart, against all our passions, and against all the combined efforts made against us by the enemies of our salvation. These graces are certainly received—they are received more frequently, in proportion to the times we frequent the sacrament—and they are received in greater measure in proportion to the good dispositions we bring to the sacrament. When a man is

fortified by these graces, and when he is faithful to them after, there is no sin but he can avoid, there is no temptation but he can conquer.

Thirdly—He receives many graces by means of a wise and enlightened director. It is a melancholy truth, that a sincere Penitent, in spite of all these graces, which he receives in the Sacrament of Penance, to preserve him from relapsing into sin, is still exposed to many violent attacks, and is still liable to many great dangers. In his progress through life, many dangerous occasions occur—violent temptations present themselves—his former ideas and sentiments begin to revive—his passions, which seemed extinguished, begin to rekindle—his desires of virtue begin to grow more languid; weak in himself, and discouraged by these obstacles, which he did not expect and was not prepared for, he would infallibly yield in the conflict if he had not some kindly prop to support him—some friendly hand to assist him: and these he will always find in a wise and enlightened Confessor—for Confessors were given not only as judges to absolve from sin, but as guides and conductors also, to lead Penitents on, in the paths of fidelity, which bring them at length to their God. Ordinarily speaking, God does not instruct or conduct individuals immediately by himself, but has delegated these duties to the Ministers of his Church: by them he declares his will and orders to mankind; by them he instructs us in all his salutary designs for our salvation; by them he excites us to comply with these designs; by them he discovers to us the dangers we are to avoid; by them he proposes

the efficacious means we should make use of; by them he rouses our courage, he animates our hopes, dissipates our fears, clears up our doubts, calms our alarms, banishes our scruples, and restores our souls to serenity and peace. A Penitent, therefore, receives great graces in the Sacrament of Penance, and these graces are greatly fortified by the wise instructions of an enlightened director.

Do not several Penitents, notwithstanding all these graces, relapse again into grievous sins?

It is, alas! too true that we sometimes see persons return again into a world, which they had renounced, and resign themselves again as voluntary slaves to the passions which they had seemingly conquered. These melancholy scenes are sometimes acted on the theatre of the world; such relapses bring a scandal on religion, and spread sadness over the souls of all good Christians. However, we may draw some good to ourselves from their sad fall, and, warned by their fatal example, we may avoid a similar fall.

First—By reflecting that they never fell off at once, but were a long time, and gradually descending, before they reached the bottom of the abyss. They placed too great a confidence in themselves, and too little confidence in God, because they were filled with pride; they committed numberless little sins, by indulging their vanity and sensuality, and by taking no pains to mortify their senses and passions; they were guilty of a great many small faults in their words and actions, by not watching themselves closely, and by not keeping interior recollection; they did not sufficiently avoid, or were not sufficiently on their

guard, against the immediate and remote occasions of sin; they had no fixed rule for prayer, spiritual exercises, or good works, or if they had, they did not comply with them punctually, or they discharged them negligently. All of these, or some of these causes, produce in those who have received sanctifying grace—*first*, a relaxation in the ways of virtue—*secondly*, a lukewarm state—*thirdly*, a subtraction of special graces on the part of God—and *lastly*, a scandalous fall, on the first violent temptation, or extraordinary occasion.

What do you say to those who confess but seldom?

Persons who confess rarely may be divided into those who have lost their faith, or whose faith is greatly weakened: these persons abandoned by God, generally despise, or think but little of this important article of our religion. *Secondly*—Into those who have not lost their faith, but are criminally attached to sin, and to the gratification of their passions: hence they have a great indifference for religion, for the service of God, and for their own salvation. The *third* kind is composed of the great majority of Catholics: these are firm in their faith, profess some regard for their salvation, and confess once or twice a year. In what I am going to say about confession, I do not mean to address any part of it to the two first classes above mentioned; the only thing to be done for them, is to lament their blindness, and to pray for their conversion. The *third* kind, only, are those whom I at present wish to address, and wish to convince: to these, then, I say, that their conduct is generally pre-

ductive of two effects, which should make a lively impression on their hearts. The first effect is that there are well-founded reasons to apprehend, that their confessions are not valid. The second effect is, that there is little or no probability of an amendment of life, and a reformation of will, by such confessions. For I have no difficulty in asserting, in a peremptory manner, that he who confesses but seldom, can rely but little on the goodness of his confession, and on the amendment of his life; but, on the contrary, that he should justly apprehend that his confessions are sacrilegious.

Is every confession, then, that is made but once or twice a year, sacrilegious?

I neither assert, nor mean any such thing; on the contrary, I am persuaded, that nothing but a rash, indiscreet, or extravagant zeal, could prompt any one to condemn, as sacrilegious, confessions made but once or twice a year; and indeed, it would be in some sense condemning the church itself—for the church, by obliging the faithful to an annual confession, at least, insinuates sufficiently thereby, that it is possible for a person to have the necessary dispositions to confess well once a year. Hence it is, that I do not condemn all such confessions as sacrilegious; on the contrary, I acknowledge, that there is a possibility of their being good and valid. What I therefore say, and mean to say, is, that any one who confesses but seldom has just reasons to apprehend that he makes a bad confession, and, consequently, that he profanes the sacrament; for every confession that is defective through the fault of the Penitent, either

for want of true contrition, or for want of accusing himself of his sins as he ought, is certainly sacrilegious. Now a person who confesses but once or twice a year has just reasons to dread that he has not true contrition for his sins, or that he does not accuse himself of his sins as he ought; and, consequently, such a person has just reason to dread, that he profanes the sacrament by such a confession.

What reason have you to think that such a person has not the contrition he ought to have?

Many, indeed; but I shall confine myself now to the reasons which may be derived from contrition itself. All Divines allow, that the sorrow for our sins, required in the Sacrament of Penance, should be interior, sincere, sovereign, or superior to all other sorrows, and supernatural in its object and in its principal. Now, let me ask any of these persons I speak of, whether their contrition has these qualities just mentioned? Let them answer me, candidly, whether the sorrow they have for having offended God be superior to any sorrow they have for any earthly loss whatsoever? Let them answer me, candidly, whether the sorrow they have be supernatural in its principle—that is, whether it proceeds from the Holy Ghost, and whether the Holy Ghost alone, and no human motive whatsoever, brought them to the confessional? When they have so long neglected, resisted, and extinguished all the graces of the Holy Ghost in their souls, can they expect to command it immediately, and in a moment's warning, whenever they take it into their head to go to confession? St. John says “that this Holy Spirit comes where he chooses,

and St. Bernard says, "when he chooses." Can a sinner, who has so many times resisted this Holy Ghost, imagine to himself that he can command the same Holy Ghost to come to his assistance instantaneously, when called upon? It is true that the Holy Ghost will not fail us in the time of need, if we take the proper methods to invoke him, and to incite him to descend into our hearts. These methods are: retiring awhile from the world; *secondly*—constant and fervent prayer; *thirdly*—giving alms in proportion to our abilities; *fourthly*—practicing some penances and austerities; *fifthly*—visiting the Blessed Sacrament and hearing mass devoutly; *sixthly*—meditating for some days on the great truths of Christianity, and the last ends of man.

Do these persons, who confess but seldom, prepare themselves in this manner, to procure true, sincere, and supernatural contrition?

They have, therefore, just reasons to apprehend that they confess without this contrition, and, consequently, that they profane the sacrament.

ON FREQUENT CONFESSION.

How is there danger of sacrilege in the confessions of those who confess but rarely?

Every one who confesses is strictly bound by the divine law, to confess all the mortal sins of which he is guilty, with their number, the circumstances that change the species of sin, and the circumstances that aggravate considerably the sin; and any confession that, through the fault of the Penitent, is defective in any of these, is a sacrilegious confession. Now, is there not just reason to apprehend, that a person who confesses but seldom will make some fault relative to some of these particulars, either in examining his conscience, or in confessing them? for more time, attention and diligence are required to examine our consciences, when we are a long time absent from confession, than the world is willing to think, or willing to bestow on such an important work. And when the examination is defective, the obvious consequence that follows is, that the confession must be defective, and consequently sacrilegious.

How is a person in danger of relapsing again into sin by not continuing to frequent confession?

A person who does not frequent the sacraments suffers his bad habits to revive with additional strength, causes the vivacity of his grief to relax, the firmness of his resolutions to be

enervated, and the sentiments of grace to evaporate.

First—His bad habits revive ; these bad habits were first contracted by reiterated acts, and were fortified by not being confessed. The Sacrament of Penance does not eradicate these bad habits immediately ; it effaces sins, it is true, but it does not destroy the habits before contracted ; when, therefore, dangerous objects present themselves anew, they awaken the habit that lay dormant, and occasion a strong conflict in the soul. Add to this, the combined attack of all our external and internal enemies, the disgust and disrelish of an uniform and regular rule of life, which is a painful restraint to us, the railleries of our worldly acquaintance, human respect, and the constant violence we must offer to our senses and inclinations. It is not surprising that a man thus violently attacked, and deprived of the great succours and graces which the sacraments afford, should yield to these powerful solicitations, and relapse into sin.

How does the vivacity of grief relax in such persons ?

I suppose such a person really to have received sanctifying grace when he received, and consequently that his sorrow for sin was true and genuine ; still, however, this grief will soon diminish, and in a short time finally cease, if he do not frequent the sacraments. The hottest fire, when not kept up properly and nourished, gradually loses its great heat, dies away insensibly, and at last is entirely extinguished. In like manner, the greatest and truest sorrow, when it is not properly kept up and nourished by the

causes that first excited it, will soon abate, diminish by degrees, and at last die entirely away. The ordinary means that excite contrition and nourish it are, prayer, meditation, examination of conscience, preparation for confession, and confession itself. When a man ceases to practice these great means of contrition, he will soon cease practising contrition itself, and will soon relapse into the same sinful and worldly life from which he had just emerged; this seldom happens by a plunge, all at once, but it steals on a man insensibly and gradually; the same society that he formerly had, the same discourses, the same objects, the same examples, and the same interests gradually kindle his passions again, and these passions once kindled anew, gradually extinguish the remorses of his conscience and the sorrow he formerly had for his sins. At first, indeed, his conscience reproaches him with his deviations from rectitude, but he soon grows tired of these reproaches, and endeavours to silence or stifle them. By acting thus his passions acquire daily a greater empire over him, and at last plunge him again into that torrent from which he had before escaped with such difficulty; he becomes now more insensible to his wretched state than he was before, and perseveres in it, without sorrow or contrition for his sins.

How does the resolution become enervated?

When such persons as we are speaking of go to confession, one of the most essential and necessary practices, imposed on them by an enlightened Confessor, is, to confess more frequently than they did before; they submit to

this, they promise to do so, but alas! there is nothing they so soon forget, or so little mind, as this promise or its obligation. A little before, and a little after confession, a man looks on this practice as absolutely necessary—he condemns his past conduct, and severely reproaches himself for his neglect; but alas! such is the weakness of the human heart, he soon forgets all his resolutions of frequenting the sacraments and, once failing in this essential resolution, he soon fails in all his other good resolutions; they are all neglected, forgotten, and vanish: he soon neglects, and afterwards entirely abandons his prayers, his meditations, his pious reading, his exminations of conscience, his ejaculations, his vigilance, and his good works.

A sick person, who takes a disgust to all kinds of physical remedies, and to all kinds of physicians, will easily relapse; and soon render himself incurable, through his own fault. The same thing will happen to a Penitent, who, through disgust, disrelish, or any similar motive, abandons confession, and the salutary remedies it contains; his disorders will become every day more difficult to be cured. The fear of the world soon takes place of the fear of God in his heart, the desire of pleasing the world succeeds the desire of pleasing God, and the love of the world displaces, at last, the love of God, which had before occupied his heart. Hence, it is confirmed, by constant experience, that a man who ceases to frequent the sacrament of penance, will soon cease to form or execute any good resolution.

How is grace lost by people of this kind?

It is equally impossible for a sinner to begin his conversion, or to continue it without the help of grace. On his conversion to God, he received great light in the understanding, which discovered to him, clearly, the horror of his state, and made him tremble for his salvation; he received compunction of heart, which made him detest his past conduct, and return to God. Approaching, then, with the necessary dispositions to the tribunal of penance, he was absolved from his sins and reconciled to God. Besides the sanctifying grace common to all the sacraments, he received, then, the graces peculiar to the sacrament of penance; these graces are calculated to fortify him against all the allurements of sin, and against all the attacks of his enemies. If he, therefore, persevered in receiving these graces often, they would have undoubtedly secured him against a deplorable relapse into sin. After either thinking that he could support himself in the state of grace, without having recourse so often to the sacrament, or seduced by some other false principle or illusion, he neglects frequenting the sacrament—then, abandoned to his usual weakness, and unsupported by grace, he soon relapses (but by degrees) into his former vicious conduct, and even becomes worse than he was before. It is true, he sometimes feels the pungent stings of remorse, and the reproaches of his conscience, but by not heeding them, nor attending to them, he soon becomes insensible to them; his heart, open to every external object, becomes entirely dissipated, from the constant impressions received from without, while the seeds of grace sown

there, are soon stifled, by the increasing multitude of weeds, that are suffered to grow there; he carefully avoids the company of all who could serve him—he neglects meditation—he abandons books—and no longer finds a relish in any thing but in the gratification of his senses; he no longer frequents the sacraments—grace is lost—grace is not recovered—and thus the poor Penitent, once in a fair way of salvation, is, perhaps, lost for ever.

What concluding remarks do you make?

A thinking man can never be sufficiently astonished, nor sufficiently deplore, the great blindness and insensibility of the world in general, not only to God's infinite goodness, but to their own greatest and most essential interests. Every one must know, and every one must feel, how necessary it is for him to be supported in his weakness against all the enemies of his salvation; and every believing Catholic knows, that the sacrament of penance was established by God, for this purpose; and yet, most of the Catholics of the world neglect to profit of this sacrament as they ought. Let man, ungrateful man, do what he can to offend and to insult his God, yet this offended, this insulted God is always ready to receive this ungrateful man again to his favour and friendship, whenever he approaches the sacrament of penance with true dispositions. Reflect a little here on this boundless goodness of God, and on this most monstrous ingratitude of man. God, ever ready to pardon faults, and even the same faults repeated over again, and to the same criminal who committed the same faults often before; and yet this criminal is so

insensible, so hardened, that he will not take the trouble of even asking pardon for these faults.—How different, entirely, are our sentiments and our conduct in things that regard our health or our temporal interests. Where can we find any rational man that, when dangerously sick, will not call in a skilful physician and take the remedies he prescribes, however nauseous, however disagreeable, and how long soever continued? Where will we find a rational man who, after escaping a dangerous sickness, will not take every care and precaution in his power not to relapse into the same sickness again? Where shall we find a subject, who has rebelled against his King, and is afterwards at the King's mercy, either to destroy, or to pardon him, that would not gladly avail himself of the King's proffered mercy, and ardently embrace the favourable occasion of being again restored to all the favours and privileges he had forfeited by his conduct? A man, who would act otherwise, could be rarely found, and if he could be found, he would not fail to be condemned by the rest of mankind.—It is only in our spiritual concerns that we are entirely blind, and entirely insensible. Let us conclude our remarks with addressing the sinner, in the words of St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome: “ You have sinned, a thousand times; have recourse sincerely, a thousand times, to the sacrament of penance, for you can never exhaust its healing virtues. There is no remedy so sure, or so useful for sin, as to confess it as soon as you can after committing it. The longer you will delay this, the more exposed you will ever be, to add sin to sin.—On the other hand, the

more you will frequent the sacraments, the more strength and support you will find to live, to persevere, and to die in the grace and love of God."

ON INDULGENCES.

What is meant by indulgences?

By an indulgence is meant a remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, after the sin itself has been forgiven by God. This remission of temporal punishment is granted by applying the satisfactions contained in the treasury of the church, in virtue and in consequence of the power of the keys left by Christ to his church, not only in the Sacrament of Penance, but out of it also.

On this definition of indulgences observe—

First—That indulgences never remit sin, nor the guilt of sin, nor the eternal punishment due to sin; they always suppose these already forgiven; indulgences only remit the temporal punishments due to sin.

Secondly—That, by the treasury of the church, is meant, an aggregate of spiritual goods remaining in the divine acceptance, and the disposal of which is entrusted to the church. These spiritual goods consist of the infinitely and superabundantly great satisfactions of Christ, and also of the satisfactions of the saints.

Thirdly—That this treasure is, and ever will be, inexhaustible—for it is composed chiefly of the satisfactions of our Saviour, which being in-

finite, can never be exhausted. The satisfactions of the saints are daily added to it ; for, though all the saints have been abundantly rewarded in heaven for all the good they have done, and for all the evils they have suffered, here below, yet the Mother of God, St. John the Baptist, and innumerable other saints and martyrs, have satisfied more for sins in this life, than God ordinarily requires, in the proportion which God observes in requiring punishment and satisfaction.

How are indulgences divided ?

They are divided into perpetual indulgences, and into indulgences for a limited time ; *secondly*—into local, real, and personal ; *thirdly*—into plenary indulgences, and into indulgences not plenary.

Perpetual indulgences are those that are granted without any restriction or limitation of time ; temporary indulgences are indulgences granted for a limited time ; local indulgences are those that are determined and limited to a certain particular place, for such a Chapel, for instance ; real indulgences are indulgences annexed to any material object, such as beads, a medal, &c.

Personal indulgences are indulgences directly granted to a person, without any determination to any thing or place.

Plenary indulgences are those which remit all the temporal punishment which a man owes for his sins. Indulgences, not plenary, are those that remit only a part of the temporal punishment due for sin. Indulgences, not plenary, are usually determined and reckoned by years and days. All canonical penances formerly were im-

posed for years and days, and not for weeks or months. When canonical penances began to be gradually disused in the Church, indulgences became then more common, and were substituted in the place of these penances ; the indulgences were reckoned by years and days, in the same manner that the canonical penances were imposed and reckoned.

It was likewise a custom, in former times, to impose a fast on bread and water for forty days, for certain sins : this was called a quarantine. In temporary indulgences mention is made of these quarantines ; the meaning of such an indulgence is, that so many quarantines are remitted by the indulgences, as a person would be liable to, by the canonical penances.

Likewise, when an indulgence is granted for an hundred days : this means, that a person obtaining an indulgence of an hundred days, obtains a remission of as much temporal punishment, as he would have obtained by performing a canonical penance of an hundred days, which was formerly imposed for certain faults.

Has the church really a power of granting these indulgences?

It is an article of faith, defined by the Council of Trent, session 25, that the church received from Christ the power of granting indulgences.

Matthew 16—Christ said to Peter : “To thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of Heaven : whatever thou wilt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever thou wilt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” This promise is general—it is not restricted to any sin, nor to any kind of sin ; it is extended to, and compre-

hends in the fullest extent, every tie, and every kind of tie, that could prevent—every obstacle that could retard—our attainment of salvation. Hence it ought to be understood as promising a power to absolve, not only from sin, but from all censures whatsoever ; a power to release all temporal punishment due to sin ; a power to dispense in vows, &c. This power, so promised, Christ afterwards, in the 21st St. John, granted to St. Peter, when he said, “ Feed my sheep, &c.”

The church, firmly persuaded that she had this power, made use of it on every necessary occasion, from the very cradle of Christianity, successively down through all ages to the present time ?

First—St. Paul forgave the incestuous Corinthian a part of the punishment he was doomed to undergo. This was, according to Saint Thomas, granting to this Corinthian a real indulgence.

It was a constant practice in the primitive church to release the penances imposed on the faithful, at the request of the martyrs : this is evident from Tertullian and St. Cyprian. When the penitential canons were afterwards abolished in the church, indulgences became then more common, and were substituted partly in the place of these canons.

That indulgences release the temporal punishment due to sin, not only in the sight of the church, but also, really and efficaciously in the sight of God, is plain from—

First—Christ's own words, when he said, “ Whatever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Secondly—From St. Paul saying, “ That he forgave the Corinthian, in the person of Christ.”

Thirdly—From the Council of Trent, where it says, “that indulgences were useful and salutary.” Now, if indulgences did not really and truly release the temporal punishment due to sin before God, it is not conceivable in what sense they could be called useful and salutary.

St. Thomas assigns very solid reasons why indulgences should avail so much in the sight of God. “There exists,” he says, “an union between all the members of Christ’s mystical body; there exists, also a communion of saints. From both these causes it happens, that the merits and passions of some members can be applied to other members of the same body; for, all the members of the body never confine their services or utility to themselves alone, but combine to do all the service in their power to the other members of the same body, and to the body itself.” Hence, by the virtual will of the saints, who performed many good and satisfactory works, these satisfactions may be applied to the common good and utility of all the members of the church. It will be readily granted, that these good works of the saints were abundantly rewarded by everlasting happiness; but these good works, considered as satisfactory, could still be applied to the utility of others—for, in every good work there is always included a double value, or a value of two kinds: a meritorious value, and a satisfactory value. The meritorious value of a work, is derived from the principle of grace and charity with which it is done; considered in this light, it is rewarded, and consequently promotes and contributes to the happiness of the performer of the good work. The satisfactory value of a good work, is derived from the labour, difficulty, and hardship suffered

and undergone in doing the good work; the intention of such a work, considered in this point of view, tends directly to repair an injury or outrage done to another.

How many things are required to make indulgences valid and useful?

Three—authority in the giver, grace in the receiver, and piety in the cause.—This authority is vested in all who preside over the church in a public capacity of a general ruler, and have jurisdiction in the external forum—such as Popes, Archbishops, and Bishops. The Pope, as head of the whole church, is authorised to give indulgences to the whole church; but Archbishops and Bishops are confined to give indulgences to their respective districts only. Bishops had, from the beginning of the church, a power of granting a plenary indulgence in their own dioceses, and both enjoyed and used it till the fourth Council of Lateran; in this Council they were deprived of this power, and limited to grant indulgences but for forty days in all ordinary cases, and an hundred days indulgence in the consecration of a church; and on the anniversary day of such a consecration, forty days. However, though a Bishop, by the present established discipline of the church, can by no means grant an indulgence for a longer space than what was just now mentioned, to the faithful of his diocese at large, yet, according to our most celebrated divines and canonists, he can grant indulgences in the confessional to his own Penitents, in the same manner and for the same reasons that the Popes grant indulgences to the faithful at large.

What conditions are required in the receiver,

in order that he may gain all the benefits of the indulgence?

The first necessary condition is, that a person should be baptized.

Secondly—That he should have had the use of reason some time in his life—because a person who never had the use of reason is not liable to any temporal punishment.

Thirdly—A person should be in a state of grace; for no penalty or punishment is ever remitted to any one till he is reconciled with God. Nor is the temporal punishment due to the smallest venial sin ever remitted by any indulgence whatsoever, till a person has contrition for that venial sin. Hence it follows, clearly, that any one wishing to gain an indulgence, and retaining still an affection for any venial sin or sins, does not obtain a remission of the temporal punishment corresponding to that venial sin or sins.

Fourthly—It is required that a person should perform the different works prescribed by the grantor of the indulgence; no one can gain an indulgence without complying with this condition. If, therefore, any one should, through ignorance or invincible forgetfulness, omit any part of the works or prayers imposed, that person gains no indulgence at that time.

What are the works usually imposed to gain an indulgence?

The works ordinarily imposed for indulgences are all, or some of the following:—*first*, to visit such churches as are marked out by the giver. *Secondly*—such prayers as are prescribed, and for the intention they are prescribed. *Thirdly*—

fasting on the days ordered. *Fourthly*—alms-deeds, according to a person's abilities. *Fifthly*—confession and communion, when they are prescribed by the granter of the indulgence. Every rational person will readily admit that these works, good in themselves, should be all performed in a proper manner—in a manner acceptable to God, and corresponding with the intention of the granter of the indulgence. Hence churches should be visited, and prayers said, not only in a decorous manner, but in a manner really devout and truly agreeable to God; the prayers should be vocal. Though mental prayers, ordinarily speaking, are preferable to vocal prayers, yet, to gain an indulgence, vocal prayers are necessary, because such is the intention of the granter of indulgences. Sometimes the number and quantity of these prayers are not determined; it may then suffice, according to some of the best of our divines, to say devoutly five or seven paters and aves for the intention of the church.

When the quantity of alms to be given is not determined by the granter, every one should then give alms in proportion to his or her means: this proportion should be regulated by the rules of prudence and discretion, and according to the intention of the granter: should any one give less than he ought to give, according to his means, he would not be thereby deprived of all the benefits of the indulgence, though he would gain a great deal more benefit by increasing his liberality; for, as St. Thomas says, “when the quantity of prayers and alms are not determined precisely by the granter, then the greater quan-

tity of alms well given, and of prayers well said will entitle the performer of both to a proportionably grater share in the indulgence granted.

It may be observed here that partial indulgences may be as often gained as a person performs the works prescribed by the granter. For instance—there are two hundred days of indulgence granted by Sixtus Quintus, and confirmed by Benedict XIII. to any one who devoutly says the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. These kinds of indulgences may be often gained on the same day; but, according to Innocent VIII., a plenary indulgence can be obtained but once on any given day.

Secondly—An actual or virtual intention of gaining the indulgence is required in all, in order to gain the indulgence; and when the church requires a particular intention in the grant, every one's prayers should be then offered according to the intention of the church.

Should every thing done, in order to gain an indulgence, be done in the state of grace?

It is the commonly received opinion among divines, that to gain an indulgence it is not necessary that every good and prescribed work should be done in the state of grace; it is sufficient if the last of these good works be performed in a state of grace. The reasons of this opinion are, that these good works are not required as meritorious and satisfactory, but as conditions and dispositions to receive the indulgence.

Though it be not necessary that the prescribed works should be *all* performed in the state of grace, yet it is doubtless necessary that these

works should be done with a penitential spirit, and without any affection to mortal sin, otherwise a person, to gain the indulgence, should do them over a second time; for no good works can be properly said to be true dispositions to obtain a release of temporal punishment, unless these works be really performed either in the state of sanctifying grace, or with a true penitential spirit, and, consequently, without any affection to mortal sin. There is one case indeed, where all the prescribed works should be done in the state of grace, viz., when the end for which the indulgence is granted requires the state of grace in the performer of these works: for instance—when indulgences are granted to render God propitious to his people.

The opinion just mentioned may be safely followed in practice, for it is the opinion of the most eminent divines in the Catholic Church;—*first*, that every one should endeavour to perform all the prescribed works in the state of grace, because it is more certain then that he obtains all the benefits of the indulgence; and *secondly*, because good works done in the state of grace are more meritorious and satisfactory before God, than good words done by a person not in the state of grace. Hence it follows, clearly, that every one will more fully and more amply gain all the benefits of the indulgence, in proportion to the state of sanctifying grace he is in, while he is performing the prescribed good works, and in proportion to the contrition he has for his sins, whilst engaged in doing these works; for, indulgences remit temporal punishment as efficaciously as the sacraments produce the ef-

fects peculiar to the sacraments. But the sacraments produce the effects peculiar to them, in just proportion to the preparations and dispositions of the persons who receive them, and consequently, indulgences will produce the effects peculiar to themselves, in just proportion to the preparations and dispositions of those who receive them.

Hence it follows again, clearly, that few, very few, after gaining a plenary indulgence, are thereby exempted from suffering some punishment in the other world; for it rarely, very rarely indeed, happens, that a person does not retain an affection to some venial sin or other; and, while a person retains an affection to any venial sin, he is neither forgiven that sin, nor the temporal punishment due to that sin.

If the prescribed works are done but by halves, or done by another, will the indulgence be obtained?

In neither case can the indulgence be obtained. All indulgences that require fasting and praying, require, also, that every one who wishes to gain the indulgence, should fast and pray for himself. Likewise the indulgence is not gained when the prescribed works are not all, morally speaking, performed.

Is confession necessary in order to gain an indulgence?

When confession is not required in the Bull as necessary, confession then is not necessary, if a person be in the state of grace. But any person who is in the state of mortal sin, confession then is necessary, as being the ordinary means appointed by God to recover a state of grace.

But as all Bulls for indulgences, now-a-days, contain always a clause that indulgences can only be obtained by those who are truly contrite, and confess as they ought, it is now to be held as certain, that confession should be considered as a work enjoined, and a condition necessary to be complied with, in order to obtain the indulgence. Hence a person who is conscious of nothing but of a venial sin, is, however, obliged to confess, in order to obtain the indulgence. This, however, has been determined by the sacred congregation in 1759, and in 1763 the same sacred congregation has determined, that every one who is in the habit of confessing weekly, unless lawfully hindered, is entitled, by that one weekly confession, to receive the benefit of every indulgence that may happen in that week, except they fall unfortunately, into mortal sin. The decree excepts indulgences granted as a jubilee, or *ad instar* jubilee; confession, in these two cases, is necessary to gain the indulgence.

Is piety, ex parte causæ, necessary in order to gain, &c.?

Yes, undoubtedly: a just cause of indulgences comprehends two things: *first*, some end agreeable to God; *secondly*, some works enjoined to obtain that end, insomuch that the attainment of the end would be more acceptable to God, than the satisfaction due, and which is released by the indulgence.

St. Thomas says, that the due and proper end of granting an indulgence is to promote the honour and glory of God, the good of the Church, and of our neighbour.

Indulgences may likewise be granted for re-

verence to true faith, for the worship of saints, for the building of churches, &c.

Indulgences can never be granted for temporal things only, but for temporal things that have further relation to spiritual things.

Private ends may suffice for private indulgences—provided that these private ends tend ultimately to the common good of the church—such as sickness, the article of death, or the loss of a person's soul: for St Paul granted the incestuous Corinthian an indulgence. But it should be observed, that the end intended should be distinct from the effect of the indulgences themselves, otherwise an end would never be wanting.

When indulgences are granted to many, it is not necessary that the good works of every individual should bear an entire and just proportion to the total end of the indulgence; but it is sufficient that the prayers and good works of all, collectively taken, should bear such a proportion; for instance—five *paters* and five *aves* are said by every person for the propagation of faith, for the conversion of sinners, for peace. Now, though five *paters*, &c. of any individual, singly considered, may justly be reputed as trifling and insignificant, and no way proportioned to so great an end; yet, these prayers repeated by so many thousands, and coalescing together for one end, should be justly deemed a thing very considerable, and fully proportioned to the end.

Is an indulgence granted without a just cause, valid?

An indulgence granted without a just cause is invalid, and of no effect, for no superior in the church has so absolute and uncontrolled domi-

nion over the treasures of the church, as to scatter them at his mere will and pleasure; he is only a steward to distribute them discreetly, prudently, and for a just and sufficient cause. Hence, no superior can ever dispense, in things of divine right, without a just, sufficient and well founded reason for doing so. For instance, a man makes a lawful vow, such a vow becomes of divine right, and no superior can dispense in that vow, without a just and sufficient reason. In like manner, temporal punishment is due to every sin, by divine right, and to relax this punishment, without a sufficient cause, would be acting directly against a divine right. It would be squandering prodigally, and not prudently distributing, things entrusted to our care and management.

Do all persons profit equally by an indulgence, the conditions of which they fulfil?

It is highly probable, that the benefits of indulgences are received differently, by different people, and, consequently, that they who perform the prescribed works with greater devotion and better dispositions, receive greater benefit by them than those who perform them with less devotion, and dispositions not equally good. This opinion can be supported by the authority of Boniface VIII. when he declares, in one of his Bulls about indulgences, that every one will merit more, and obtain the indulgence more efficaciously, the more devoutly and the more frequently he will perform the prescribed works.

It may be hence easily understood, how several persons, through their own faults, do not

always receive the full benefit of plenary indulgences ; as likewise, how some may receive the full benefit of a plenary indulgence, while others, who perform at the same time the prescribed works, receive a much smaller benefit from them. Surely these considerations should excite every one to use his utmost efforts to perform all the prescribed works, in the best and in the most devout manner they are capable of, to obtain plenary indulgences as often as they could, and never neglect a life of penance and mortification, as such a life is the best preparation and disposition they could bring, to receive all the benefits of a plenary indulgence.

Can indulgences be applied to the souls in Purgatory ?

Before the question be directly answered, it may be necessary to remark the difference there is between the indulgences for the living and for the dead. Indulgences for the living may be fitly compared to payment made, and acquittal given, for all debts : and indulgences for the dead may be likewise compared to a full payment offered for debts, but not known whether it is received or not. Indulgences for the living are acts of judicial authority, done by a commission from Christ, whereby the debts of the living are paid by the church ; but the church having no authority over the dead, cannot free them in the same manner ; all that the church does in this case is to offer the full value and amount of their debts, and to beg of God to accept the payment. This premised, I say, that indulgences can be applied for the dead, and contribute greatly to free them from purgatory ; for it is an allowed

truth in the Catholic church, that the faithful here can apply their satisfactions for the souls in purgatory, and that such satisfactions are very serviceable to these souls. Now, by a parity, just in every respect, the church can apply to the same souls the satisfactions of Christ and the saints, which satisfactions are contained in the treasure of the church, and are left to the church's disposal. *Secondly*—the church can grant indulgences to the living, therefore to the dead: for no good reason, according to St. Thomas, can be assigned, why the common merits should not be given over to one as well as to the other, being both members of the same body. *Thirdly*—it is the constant practice and perpetual tradition of the Catholic church, that indulgences are very useful to the souls in purgatory.

Have you any observations to make with regard to indulgences for the dead?

First—When indulgences are granted for the living only, they cannot then be applied to the dead, with any advantage for the dead; and when they can be applied for the dead, there must be special mention made of the dead in the Bull.

Secondly—No one can apply any indulgence he receives to any other person living.

Thirdly—The same conditions are required for the validity of indulgences applied to the dead, as when applied to the living, viz., authority in him who grants them—*secondly*, a sufficient reason for granting them—*thirdly*, a state of grace in him who receives them—*fourthly*, a person who applies indulgences to the dead.

should have an intention of doing so, and should carefully perform all the prescribed works.

Fourthly—When a soul for whom the indulgence is applied, is not in purgatory, but in heaven or in hell, then the benefit of that indulgence falls back again into the common treasure of the church, or is applied by God's judgment, secret and unknown to us, either to souls who want it most, or to those whose works of mercy, while here below, entitled them, in some respect, to such an application. Hence it is recommended to every one who applies an indulgence to a person dead, to make a conditional application of it to another, or to others, in case the first person cannot benefit of it.

Which is it more meritorious to apply an indulgence to the dead than to a person's self?

It is the opinion commonly received among divines, that it is more meritorious to apply an indulgence to the dead than to a person's self; for, as they say, where there is greater charity there also is greater merit. Now, there is certainly greater charity in bestowing our property on our neighbour, to free him from punishment, than to reserve that property for ourselves; therefore, there is greater merit to apply an indulgence to the dead than to reserve it for ourselves.

Secondly—No one ever merits more than when he exposes himself to the danger of suffering, by relieving others; such is the present case, consequently, &c.

Besides, it is a much greater virtue to give some of our necessaries to the poor, than to give them our superfluities; this is exactly the

present case.—*Lastly*, according to St. Thomas, the affection which prompts a man to suffer for a friend makes his satisfaction more acceptable to God than if this man suffered for himself—for the one flows from cheerful charity, the other from necessity.

What means a jubilee?

A jubilee is a plenary indulgence granted by the Pope, with certain solemnities, and accompanied by great favours and particular privileges to all those who perform the prescribed works.

There are two kinds of jubilee, one an ordinary jubilee, and the other an extraordinary jubilee. An ordinary jubilee is that which now recurs every twenty-five years, and is called the jubilee of the holy year; an extraordinary jubilee is that which the Pope, induced by important reasons, grants sometimes in the intermediate space of twenty-five years. This extraordinary jubilee is usually granted in the beginning of every Pope's reign, in order to draw down the blessings and graces of heaven on the new Pope.

Boniface VIII revived the jubilee in the year 1300. It is evident from the Canon Law, *Cap. Antiquorum in Extra*, that he only revived, but did not establish, this jubilee first; he determined that this jubilee should be granted and held every hundredth year.

Afterward Clement VI reduced this period to fifty years, in imitation of the Jewish jubilee, from which it has borrowed its name.

Urban VI afterwards reduced this period still more, and made it thirty-three years, in imitation of Christ's life, who lived that age.

Lastly—Paul II, considering the shortness of

man's life, and the severity with which God punishes the sins of mankind, reduced it to every twenty-five years, and this is the interval of time observed between every jubilee since his time.

The jubilee of the holy year is opened with great solemnity in Rome, on the evening before Christmas day, and continues for a whole year. This length of time was granted in order to induce the faithful, from all parts, to flock to Rome and to unite their prayers, in that first See and centre of Christianity, for the propagation of faith and the conversion of mankind, as also to pay due honour to the tombs of the Apostles, and to beg their intercession and protection for the church.

To encourage the faithful still more to go to Rome, during this year, it is usual to suspend all other indulgences whatsoever, granted by Popes to any other part of the world. This regulation was made in the time of Sixtus IV, but has varied at different times since; but in general, all indulgences, whether plenary or partial, have been suspended, or much restricted, during the holy year.

When the jubilee of the holy year is expired, after twelve months continuance in Rome, it is then communicated to all other countries in Christendom.

An extraordinary jubilee is usually granted on the accession of every Pope to the Papal Chair, since the time of Sixtus V.

A fortnight is generally allowed for this jubilee; all the prescribed works must be completed in the same week, including the Sunday

following for communion ; it has been so decreed by Clement XIII.

No one can gain the indulgence of the jubilee twice, nor profit of the privileges annexed thereto, unless it be specified to the contrary in the Bull.

A jubilee does not grant a more plenary remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, than any other plenary indulgence usually granted by the church ; but it has many advantages annexed to it, which other plenary indulgences have not.

First—All approved Confessors have extraordinary privileges granted to them at this time, with respect to all sins, censures, reserved cases, &c.

Secondly—The indulgence on a jubilee time has more marked, and certain advantages, than any other indulgence whatsoever ; *first*, it is more universal ; all the Roman Catholics of the world are doing penance for their sins together, or nearly together ; this general penance always inclines the God of mercy to bestow on them greater favours. *Secondly*, the causes of the indulgences are more just, more weighty, and better founded, than the causes for which other indulgences are granted, and consequently the indulgences themselves are more certain then, than at any other time.

Thirdly—The penitential and satisfactory works prescribed are greater than the works and prayers usually prescribed on times of other plenary indulgences, and consequently they furnish a greater certainty of gaining the benefit of these indulgences than any one could derive from per-

forming the satisfactory works prescribed to gain other indulgences.

What are the extraordinary privileges granted to Confessors in a jubilee time?

These are sometimes greater, and sometimes less; some Bulls grant more privileges than others; in general, however, the following privileges are usually granted:

First—It is permitted to every one to choose any Confessor, approved in the diocese where he lives: this Confessor is empowered to absolve from all reserved cases, and from all censures whatsoever, except heresy.

Secondly—Every approved Confessor has power to change all kinds of vows into other good works, nearly equal to the obligation of the vow; but he must necessarily impose some good works nearly to an equality, otherwise it would be a dispensation, and not a commutation. But it should not be forgotten that this change of vows should not be made capriciously, but always for sufficient and well-founded reasons. When these reasons occur, and a change of vows is judged necessary, then any obligation that was perpetual by the vow should be changed into some other perpetual obligation, but more convenient and less distressing than the former; obligations that were personal should be changed into other personal obligations, and real obligations into real. A vow of perpetual chastity, and of entering into religion, are always excepted, and ever reserved to the Pope.

A Confessor cannot make use of this faculty but in the confessional alone, and in favour only of those who seriously intend to profit of the ju-

bilee in its full extent. If the Penitent is not able to perform all the works prescribed by the Bull, the Confessor can, in that case, change these works into other works, which the Penitent is able to perform.

Though communion, in all who can communicate, be necessary in order to gain the jubilee, yet children who are not judged fit for communion, on account of their age, may gain the jubilee without communion, provided they perform all the other works prescribed.

Which are the indulgences really true, and approved of, that can and may be gained by the faithful.

The Council of Trent orders that no indulgences should be published in any diocese, without the sanction and approbation of the Bishop of that diocese; the Council meant, by this order, to prevent the faithful from being imposed on by false indulgences. Hence, in conformity to this intention of the Council, I here publish and declare the following indulgences to be genuine and authentic. The faithful, therefore, who are solicitous about every thing that regards Heaven and eternal bliss, should be anxiously careful to profit of them:—

PLENARY INDULGENCES.

A Plenary Indulgence may be gained by the faithful on the day of enrollment as members in the Confraternity of the Christian Doctrine, provided they approach the holy Sacraments of Penance and Communion, and unite their prayers with the intentions of the Church:—Pins VI, 10th August, 1788.

The faithful gain a Plenary Indulgence on the feast

of Patrons, and Titular Saints of Churches or Oratories, provided they approach the Blessed Sacraments, visit these Churches, and pray for the propagation of the Catholic Faith.—Pius VI, 12 January, 1783.

A Plenary Indulgence is granted to the faithful in the article of death, who contritely invoke, at least from their heart, the most holy name of Jesus, and recommend their souls unto the Lord.—Benedict XIV, 9 April, 1747, and Clement XIV, 5 April, 1772.

It is not required to confess or to receive in that Church, where an Indulgence is granted, for the Decrees never enjoin Local Confession or Communion. It is sufficient, therefore, to approach the Sacraments in any Chapel or place, but they should visit that particular Church on the day of Indulgence, and there pray according to the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, for the extirpation of heresy, for the propagation of the Catholic faith, &c.

Any member of the confraternity of the Christian Doctrine and Blessed Sacrament can gain a plenary indulgence on any sunday of the month, by confessing receiving, and saying five or seven *pater*s and *ares*, for the intention of the Catholic Church. In every other Christian country the indulgence of the confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament can only be gained on the third Sunday of each month; but Pope Pius VI. at the petition of the Bishops of Leinster, has granted permission to all the said confraternities in Leinster to benefit of this indulgence any Sunday of the month most convenient to them.

The Order of the Blessed Virgin, commonly called the Scapular, have a plenary indulgence every third Sunday of the month.

The Order of St. Dominick, commonly called the Rosary, have an indulgence on the first and second Sunday of the month.

Any one who devoutly receives the Holy Communion, and devoutly prays for the intention of his holiness the Pope, in his own parish chapel, the first Sunday of every month, likewise receives a plenary indulgence.

Any one who devoutly says the acts of faith, hope, and charity, every day during a month, is entitled to a plenary indulgence.

Any one who meditates every day during a month, a quarter of an hour at least, receives a plenary indulgence.

Any one who says the *Angelus Domini* three times every day during a month, receives a plenary indulgence. During the paschal time the *Regina lœtare* may be said instead of the *Angelus Domini*.

A plenary indulgence can be obtained in the different dioceses of Leinster, on the following days:—

On Christmas Day, on the Circumcision, on the Epiphany, on Easter Sunday, on Ascension Thursday, on Pentecost Sunday, on Corpus Christi, on All Saints, on the five Lady Days, every day during the octave of St. Patrick, and every day during the octave of St. Peter and St. Paul, by devoutly receiving the holy sacraments of confession and communion, and praying for the Pope's intention.

There are many indulgences attached to the orders of St. Augustine, and of St. Francis. The particular authentic documents of these indulgences may be found in the Rules and Regulations printed for the use of the members of these pious sodalities.

ON THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

In the last conference I spoke of the mortification of our passions, its necessity and utility, and proposed some general remedies for vanquishing and conquering them. I reserved for this discourse one of the most powerful remedies of all, because it required a longer discussion and fuller explanation: this great and powerful remedy is a *proper attention to the presence of God*. "Be persuaded," says the Holy Ghost, by Ecclesiasticus, "that those who fear the Lord

will sanctify their souls by the thought that they are always in the presence of God." For, in truth, Christians, were we sufficiently convinced, from frequent reflection and attention, that wherever we are, wherever we go, we must find God present; that he sees us, that he watches and knows all our thoughts, words and actions; that he could, in a single instant, by one act of his will, open the earth under our feet, and make us be swallowed down to the lowest abyss of hell when we offend him. Who is the fool, that would be so insolently mad as to proceed to any excess of iniquity? few, very few, undoubtedly. "When I consider, O Lord," says St. Augustine, "that you have your eyes perpetually open on me, and that you watch over my days, with as much care as if there was nobody else in Heaven or on earth but myself: when I consider that you see all my actions, and that you penetrate my most secret thoughts and desires, I am filled with terror and confusion."—And all Christians would be filled with a similar terror to offend, as well as St. Augustine, if they considered, as attentively as he did, that they are always in the presence of an all-seeing, all-knowing, and all-powerful Judge.

The universal and sovereign remedy which St. Basil gives, to conquer all the rebellious passions of our nature, and all the temptations of the devil, is, to consider properly the presence of God.—"Do you wish," he says, "for an easy and ready method to acquire perfection—a method which comprises, in itself, the force and efficacy of all other methods?—attend always to the presence of God." For God himself gave

this rule to Abraham, when he said to him, “Walk always in my presence, and you will be perfect.”

St. Ambrose advises a constant endeavour to recollect, incessantly, the divine presence, and adds, “that, as there is no moment in which we do not enjoy the effects and benefits of the bounty and mercy of God, so there should be no moment passed without attention to his divine presence.” St. Bernard says, “that in all our thoughts, and in all our actions, we should ever think of the divine presence, and sincerely lament, that we had passed any part of our lives without thinking of him; for, as he never forgets us, it is but just, that we should endeavour never to forget him.”

St. Gregory of Nazianzine says, “that our thoughts of God should be as frequent as our breathing; for, as constant respiration is necessary to moderate the natural heat of our bodies, so a constant recourse to God’s presence is necessary to moderate the irregular heat of our passions.

The devil is so persuaded of the excellence of this practice, that he uses his utmost efforts to banish so salutary a thought from our minds, and divert us totally from it; and if he succeed in his fatal design, there is no crime that he will not endeavour to plunge an unhappy soul into.

Would you wish to know, says a prophet, what is the source of all the iniquities of the house of Israel? All proceed from their forgetting the presence of God. “Do you know,” says the same prophet, in another place, “why all the ways of

the wicked are impure? Because they forget that they are in the presence of their God."

How can we be much astonished that this forgetfulness of the divine presence should be the cause of the ruin of man, when it was the occasion of the damnation of the angels, Lucifer, &c.?

Though these authorities from scripture and holy fathers are more than sufficient to convince us of the necessity we are under of thinking always on the divine presence, yet, I judged it would not be improper to join to them a few arguments drawn from plain reason.

If the presence of a king kindles up courage in the hearts of his soldiers, and stimulates them to perform deeds of extraordinary valour, what should not the soldiers of God do, when animated by his divine presence? What heroic courage, what intrepid resolution will they not be inspired with, to combat all vices, to conquer all passions, and to practice all virtues? Penetrated with this thought, they will all pray with attention, with recollection, and with profound respect. All their actions will be accompanied by modesty and circumspection, for fear of offending the pure eyes of that sovereign majesty, before whom they know, by faith, the most sublime intellectual beings in heaven, are seized with the most respectful awe. Their humility will be increased, their self-love kept under, their passions subdued, and a complete victory obtained over all the enemies of their salvation.

After shewing the necessity of always attending to the divine presence, method requires, that should now explain the manner, this may be done, with advantage to our souls,

The practice of the presence of God, then, consists in two acts, or points, one of the understanding, and the other of the will. The act of the understanding consists in considering that God is present every where, that he fills the universe, that he is all, in all, and all in every part, and in every creature whatsoever; afterwards make an act of faith in consequence of, or founded on this thought and consideration. We do here no more than what our faith before requires of us; for, as St. Paul says, "In him we live, move, and have our being." The Psalmist, likewise says "If I mount up to Heaven you are there; if I descend to hell I find you there; if I fly to the extremities of the sea it is your hand that guides me." God, therefore, is present in us, and within us, in a manner more real than we are ourselves; it is he who gives life to all that live, motion to all who move, existence to all that exist; his powerful presence supports every thing, and without the continual succour of this presence, all things would cease to exist, and must fall back again into their original nothing.

In forming an act of faith on the divine presence, take care never to represent him to yourself under any corporal figure or form; this would be a great error: consider him as you would the air, surrounding you, every where, and on every side; faith and reason both tells us that he is present; let us not presume to fathom the manner how he is so—that we shall never discover in this life.

The act of the will, on the divine presence, consists, according to St. Bonaventure, in the soul's ardently desiring to be united to God by

the bonds of perfect love, and in frequently sending forth fervent and sincere petitions. These are called by the saints and spiritual writers, ejaculations and aspirations, and are strongly recommended, by them, to our practice, because being short, they do not fatigue the mind, and being full of fervour and force, they arrive in the presence of God before the devil has time to disturb, by his distractions, the mind of him that prays.

St. Basil recommends to us another good method of keeping ourselves in the presence of God, which is, to make every thing we say or do serve as an occasion to put us in mind of God. For instance—if we eat or drink through necessity, let us return thanks to God; should we walk into the country, let us bless the Lord, who has rendered it fertile for our use; if we look on the sun, moon, or stars, let us praise the Lord, who created these great luminaries.

A third method, recommended by spiritual writers, to keep ourselves in the presence of God, is to reflect often on the mysteries of our Saviour's birth, life, passion and death; let us take any circumstance of these that is agreeable to our piety, or to our condition, and make it the subject of our frequent meditation. Another advantage to be derived from this method, besides keeping ourselves in the presence of God, is, that such meditations excite in our wills, acts of gratitude, love, and a desire of imitating our Saviour's sufferings; for if we could, according to St. Bonaventure, carry about with us always, in the bottom of our hearts, our crucified Lord, and suffer with his sufferings, it would greatly

contribute not only to keep us in the presence of God, but also to efface, by the impression of such a divine object, from our mind and imagination, all the disorderly ideas that occupy them, to fix in attention the faculties of our soul, and purify them all.

The last method, and indeed the best and most profitable of all, is in all our actions to raise our hearts to God, in these or similar words:— “It is for your sake, O Lord, I do this; your will is my will; because you will it, because you command it, I do it with pleasure.” By this method we not only keep ourselves in the presence of God, but we also produce acts of conformity to the will of God, and are in a state of constant prayer, according to our Saviour’s orders, of praying always.

I must make an observation here relative to all the methods I have spoken of, and which if, neglected, would render them all useless; it is this: We must never content ourselves with mere attention to the presence of God, and be afterwards negligent in performing our duties, or in avoiding faults. Such an attention would only lead us to illusion and false devotion. If we have one eye fixed on God, we should have the other fixed on the respective duties of our station and calling, and endeavour to do them all well, for his sake, and for his love. This can be easily done by all whose employments do not require a constant, actual, and external attention to what they are doing; and, in those whose attention is in a great measure engrossed by their employment, let them endeavour, after first cheerfully sub-

mitting to the will of God, to discharge their duty, and recall from time to time this sacred presence, by ejaculations and aspirations that unite the heart with God, and by affectionate emotions of the will that tend towards that adorable object.

OF CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

The Son of God, according to the Holy Fathers, descended from Heaven principally for two reasons. *First*, to redeem mankind by his passion and death. *Secondly*, to point out to us, both by instruction and example, the road that surely leads thereto.

Amongst the many divine things which he has taught us, there is nothing he inculcates more strongly, than the necessity of conforming ourselves to the divine will. In that comprehensive abridgment of prayer, which he himself formed for us, one of the petitions is, that the will of God be done on earth as it is heaven. He says in St. John, that he "came down from heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of his Father that sent him." When about to consummate the great work of redemption, and when praying in the garden, though he felt as man, with all the keenness of anguish, all the horrors of his approaching passion and death, and prayed, that the chalice, if possible, should pass from him; yet his will always remained perfectly submissive to the will of God. For he immediately

added, “however, let it be done, not according to my will, but according to thine.”

To evince the necessity of conforming our will to the divine will, it may be proper, previously, to prove the two great and fundamental principles of this doctrine.

The first is, that our perfection necessarily depends on conforming our will to the divine will, and the greatness of our perfection will be ever proportioned, to the greatness of that conformity. The truth of this principle is incontestible, and the proof of it is obvious: for every intelligent Christian is convinced, that our perfection essentially consists in the love of God, and that the greater this love is, the greater is our perfection. “It is the first and greatest of all the commandments,” says our divine Saviour. “It is the bond of perfection, it is superior to all other virtues,” says St. Paul. In a word, this is the doctrine of Christ, of his apostles, of the holy fathers, and of the Catholic Church. As, therefore, the love of God is the most sublime of all other virtues, so a perfect conformity to the will of God, is the most pure, the most noble, and the most sublime act of the love of God.

The second principle is, that nothing happens in the world, sin alone excepted, but by the order and will of God. Sickness, sufferings, losses, pains, afflictions, disgraces, calamities, are all regulated by the will of Providence. What the vulgar call good luck, fortune, chance, is a gross absurdity; yet still, unhappily, believed by the unthinking and ignorant. It is a chimerical divinity, handed down to us from the Pagan times,

and now-a-days too, often adored by the ill-informed Christian, contrary to the plain declaration of the Holy Ghost—Good and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, come to us equally from God. It is true, Providence usually brings about its designs by natural means and secondary causes; however, the effect produced by these causes flow as much from his regulating will, as if the same effects were produced by him immediately without the intervention or instrumentality of any cause whatsoever.

Consequently, chance, luck or fortune, are totally excluded from having any share in the whole circle of human events. From what we have said, it follows, by an easy deduction, that we should receive every thing that happens to us patiently, or joyfully, and thereby endeavour to conform our will to the divine will; because every thing that happens here below, happens by the will of God; and our perfection consists in conforming our will to his divine will.

The reflections of St. Doritheus and St. Augustine on this question, are too judicious to be omitted here. “When we receive any evil, disgrace, or ill-treatment from mankind, we often act as irrationally as dogs do, when pelted with a stone. As they run after a stone to bite it, and pass by the person who threw it, so we, when God sends us any mortification to expiate our sins, pass by the Almighty who sends it, and run after our neighbour to be revenged on him, though he was only an instrument in the hands of our Lord to punish us.

St. Augustine, on these words of Job, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away,” remarks,

“ that Job does not say the Lord gave and the devil has taken away ; but says, truly, the Lord, &c. This is the model,” he says, “ we should all follow, by attributing every thing but sin to God.”

It may be an additional motive to us to wish and seek for this conformity to the will of God, if we consider seriously the many advantages that may be derived from it.

First—It produces that perfect resignation to the will of Heaven which the Saints speak so much of, and the spiritual writers recommend so strongly ; for they agree, that this resignation is the source of tranquillity of soul, and peace of mind. A man possessed with the true spirit of resignation, has no wish, no desire, no will of his own, but abandons himself, his will, and all his faculties to the Divine Providence. A perfect conformity to the will of God produces the same effects ; a man who wishes to conform his will in all things to the divine will, wishes or desires for nothing but according to God’s will ; therefore, he is truly resigned and must enjoy peace and tranquillity.

Second Advantage.—He who can conform his will to the divine will, has obtained the true spirit of mortification. and acquired a conquest over his evil inclinations ; for, were our passions truly mortified, and our inordinate inclinations properly subdued, we should have no difficulty in conforming our will in all things to the divine will.

Third Advantage.—It is the greatest and most agreeable sacrifice which a man can offer to God ; for, in all other sacrifice and mortifications, a man offers but a part of himself to

God, but in this, he offers himself entirely. For instance: in temperance, in humility, in patience a man offers but a part of himself to God, but here he offers himself entirely, as a holocaust to the Divine Majesty, that God may do with him as he pleases, in the manner he pleases, and the time he pleases, without exception, without restriction, without reserve.

Fourth Advantage.—This conformity produces the most noble act of the love of God. “The proof of love,” says St. Gregory, “is in works; and the more difficult the work is, and the more repugnant to our corrupt nature, the more forcibly it proves the love.” But a perfect conformity to the will of God is the greatest work we can do for God, and the most difficult for our nature; by this conformity we mortify all our passions, we offer ourselves entirely to him—all we have, all we are, all we may possess, desire, or wish for, and consequently, produce at once, a more noble and more generous act of love in this, than we can in any thing else whatsoever.

Fifth—This conformity of our will to the divine will, is the best disposition of mind we can have, to incline God to grant us his special graces and favours; for, when he was graciously pleased to change St. Paul, from a persecutor, to an apostle of his church, he prepared him for so extraordinary a change, by infusing into him such a disposition. The words he uttered, when he fell to the ground, clearly evince this: “O Lord, what do you will that I should do?” On which words St. Bernard makes this remark: “O short but lively and efficacious prayer!” If

you would wish, then, to be perfect at once, say from your heart, with the Apostle, "O Lord, what do you will that I should do?" or with the Psalmist, "O Lord! my heart is ready, my heart is disposed to do what you please."

Sixth Advantage.—It is the only thing that can make a man happy on earth. What is it that makes men unhappy here? In general, it is poverty, sickness, disgrace, a change of fortune, the contempt of others, losses, humiliations, insults, pains, or persecutions. It is these, or some of these, that usually produce unhappiness here below. Now a man, who has the conformity we are speaking of, feels no lasting anxiety from the calamities or vicissitudes of life; he is fixed in his principle, that all, these things happen to him by the will of God; he labours and succeeds in conforming his will to the divine will, thus manifested to him; hence he feels not that uneasy pressure of unhappiness, which others feel, from the instability of human affairs, or the accidents of human life, consequently, he is more happy than others can be, who have not this conformity.—This easily explains that calm composure, and serene tranquility which always appeared on the countenances of the saints, and the true servants of God; they experienced, in a greater proportion than others, the afflictions and trials of this life; these calamities roared around their heads, but never reached their hearts.

To attain this conformity, we should be firmly persuaded, that nothing happens unto us without first passing through the hands of God, before it reaches us.

Secondly—That God never sends us, while in

this life, whether we be saints or sinners, any affliction, trouble, &c. but what he means for our good.

ON MORTIFICATION OR SELF-DENIAL.

In these words of the Angel Raphael to Tobias, "It is good to join prayer to fasting," the Holy fathers understand by the word *fasting* every thing that regards penance and the mortification of the flesh. They add, that mortification and prayer should be ever inseparably united, as two of the principal means that contribute to our perfection.

Mortification is two-fold—external and internal : external mortification comprehends all the various means we use in chastising our body, and reducing it to subjection. Internal mortification, consists in mortifying our will and our passions.

I will first speak of the necessity of mortification in general, and of the rest afterwards, in their due order :—

Man came at first out of the hands of his Creator perfectly accomplished, and without any defect or fault—a work worthy of the Creator of Heaven and earth: but, soon turning rebel to his Creator, he destroyed by his disobedience this beautiful work, and became immediately an ill-shaped mass of disorder and confusion. By his rebellion every thing in him—his senses, his imagination, his understanding, his will—were

all involved in a confused heap of general ruin. From this arises the absolute necessity of mortification; it is the only method to restore every thing in us to its primitive state, to subject our senses and appetites to reason, and our reason itself to God. "From whence proceed the wars and contradictions ye feel in yourselves?" says St. James; "is it not from your passions, which combat in your members?" Sensuality, concupiscence, and inordinate self-love are the sources from whence flow all the intestine wars, all the sins, all the faults, and all the imperfections we experience or commit, and consequently, are the greatest obstacles we can meet in our road to perfection. Hence, it is obvious, that we can never pretend to any progress in virtue until we are masters, by mortification, of our senses and passions. Our Saviour declares this truth in the most formal and positive manner: "If any one wishes to follow me, let him renounce himself, carry his cross, and then follow me." Here he plainly tells us that we must renounce all our evil inclinations and our own corrupt will, if we would sincerely follow him; this is one of the corner stones, not only of perfection, but even of a Christian life—for as St. Paul says, 2 Corinthians, "The flesh has desires contrary to the desires of the spirit, and the spirit, &c." These corrupt desires must be mortified till we put them entirely to death, "because we ought," according to the same saint, "carry his death in our body, in order that our Saviour's purity of life may shew forth in our body."

After establishing the necessity of mortification in general, I proceed, in order to speak of

the mortification of our passions and of our senses. And first, of our passions :

Among all the enemies we are to engage with in our spiritual warfare, there is none so formidable as our inordinate passions : the difficulty of vanquishing them arises from their composing a part of ourselves, and from their being constantly united in a traitorous conspiracy with our self-love to destroy us. Hence, according to all the Holy Fathers, the mortification of our passions is so necessary to a spiritual life, that this mortification may be justly called the consummation and principal end of all our spiritual exercises. To wish to arrive at perfection without proposing to ourselves this end, would be going astray entirely in the ways of God. Whatever degree of perfection we may have arrived at, we are still indispensably obliged to mortify our passions ; for true sanctity on earth does not consist in being free from imperfections, but in combating, mortifying, and vanquishing them ; for, our irregular passions are a fire constantly kindling anew in our souls, and which we can never entirely extinguish ; all we can do is to stop its progress, and, by mortification, prevent it's blazing out into a rebellion against God.

Should any one ask why has God left in man, after Baptism, this revolt of his passions ? why has not the infinitely meritorious blood of Christ washed away all these evil inclinations ? I answer, from the Council of Trent, the blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ has not entirely stopped the course of our irregular passions ; Baptism has not entirely destroyed our concupiscences ; these were still left us, that we should have constantly

enemies to fight with, both within and without, that these combats should procure us victories, and that these victories should award us triumphs. It may be said, then, that in one sense it is our advantage to have passions, to be exposed to their rebellion, and to conquer them, because by this victory we acquire a new right to Heaven. By baptism we were entitled to it as an inheritance, but by vanquishing our passions we are entitled to it as a right of conquest. "A man," says the Holy Ghost, "who conquers his passions, triumphs in a more glorious manner than he who conquers cities and kingdoms." As a further encouragement to us, let us add to the glory of this conquest the delights and pleasure that follow it: "Do you know," says the Lord, "the recompense I reserve for those souls that are victorious over their passions? I reserve for them a hidden manna, that is, a spiritual joy—an unction so pleasing that they will count as nothing all their fatigues, troubles and labours." This led St. Cyprian to say, "that to have conquered pleasure and triumphed over its charms, is in itself an extraordinary pleasure;" and St. Augustine declares, "that mortifying our passions is no affliction, but rather the acquisition of more gentle and more solid pleasures." And lastly, the pious Avila says, "Put in one scale all the troubles and pains a man suffers who resists his passions, and in the other the anxieties of a man who is a slave to them—it will be found, and it has been found by the experience of all ages, that he who is a slave to his passions suffers more pain, trouble, and anxiety, than he who resists and conquers them."

The first rule to be observed, in warring with our passions, is to oppose them quickly. Whenever you are assaulted by any violent passion, be on your guard not to be carried away by its first impulse; resist it firmly, it will weaken by degrees, and then you can easily conquer it.

The second rule is to oppose them with courage, "The Kingdom of Heaven," says our Saviour, "is obtained by violence;" that is, those generous souls who triumph courageously over themselves and over their passions, shall enter there. How gross, then, is the error of those who oppose their passions but weakly and dilatorily; an infant passion, if opposed in time, is easily conquered; but a full grown passion, strengthened by habit, requires both pains and perseverance to subdue it.

Thirdly—Never propose to yourself to conquer all your enemies in one battle, or to cut them all off with one blow; this vague resolution will scarcely produce any thing. To command success we must attack our passions one by one; we must eradicate our vices by degrees; we must never cease combatting till we will have vanquished or weakened these, our mortal enemies. We should always begin with our predominant passion, for this once subdued, the conquest of the rest easily follows.

Some who sincerely endeavour to conquer their passions, and cannot immediately succeed, are too apt to be cast down, and say that they are apprehensive that they never will be able to obtain a complete victory over their sensuality and passions. To these I answer, that their frequent falls should never discourage them from

still continuing the combat ; for, most certainly, it is a bad way to correct their fault to commit still a greater one ; let them not, though wounded, abandon the fight ; let them resist courageously still, and be persuaded that their perseverance will obtain, at last, a glorious victory ; when wounded, let them have recourse to our Saviour, the sovereign physician of souls ; let them humble themselves in his sacred presence, at the sight of their weakness ; let them repent of it, and then form generous resolutions of being more faithful for the future ; let them resume their practices with more fervor than before, for God receives into the arms of his mercy these imperfect souls who sincerely endeavour to correct their faults and to combat their passions.

It remains now to speak of the mortification of the body, and of the senses ; and here I cannot help expressing my sorrow, at the gross ignorance and sad perversion of this great and leading point in the Christian Catholic doctrine, among Catholics themselves : their self-love has invented a new road between the broad and narrow ways ; according to this new system, it is sufficient to mortify the mind and passions ; bodily mortification is not necessary ; for, interior mortification being without comparison more perfect, why should it not be sufficient ? This reasoning is contrary to the doctrine and example of all the saints, that ever lived, for they all mortified their bodies ; it is contrary to St. Paul, for he says, "those that belong to Christ have crucified their flesh with their vices ;" and again, in vi. chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, "As ye have hitherto yielded your members to serve iniquity,

so now yield them to serve justice to sanctification." It is contrary to God's calls in Scripture, expressed in many places, as in Joel, Isaias. He every where joins the mortification of the body to the mortification of the passions; and indeed this is obviously just, according to the dictates of plain reasoning. If the soul has not sinned alone, why should it suffer alone? The body has concurred with the soul in rebelling against God, and it is but just that it should share in the punishment due to the joint crime. I will go further, and declare to these refined sensualists, that without mortifying their bodies they have but a very feeble security for their salvation. Let them weigh these words of St. Paul: "I combat not like one beating the air; I chastise my body and reduce it to subjection, lest after having preached to others, I should become a reprobate myself." Two truths are plainly contained here; the first, that it is nugatory and vain to hope to conquer ourselves, without mortifying the body; the second is, that the mortification of the body is absolutely required, in order that the soul should be saved.

As the mortification of the senses is comprehended under the mortification of the body, what has been said about the one will serve in general for the other. But perhaps it may be necessary to give one or two instances how to mortify the senses;—And first, the sight: never fix your eyes on any dangerous object; and, should chance or necessity throw any such in your way, turn away your eyes immediately.

Secondly—Never look attentively on any object that may afterwards cause distraction in prayer.

Thirdly—Never look at the most innocent object merely to gratify your curiosity.

Fourthly—Be ever careful to restrain the liberty of your eyes in looking on any object, though ever so lawful. By this mortification, you merit a new degree of grace, and a new degree of glory. Transfer this practice to the rest of your senses.

It remains now to answer the objections and difficulties raised against mortification by worldlings and sensualists, of our own and other religions.—At the very sound of the word *mortification* their proud nature takes the alarm, their self-love rebels, and their words and imagination aggravate all its rigours and austerities; but I tell them, that the austerities of mortification are not so dreadful as they imagine, and that they cause more fear than harm; that no pleasure equals the pleasure mortification procures, by its victory over sensuality; that the yoke of our Saviour is easy, and his burden light; that the unction of the Holy Ghost often renders easy and light what we look upon as impossible and impracticable; that the practice of numberless persons, of all ages, conditions, and sexes, confirm this truth beyond the possibility of a reply; for they have all solemnly protested that the pleasures of one day spent in the house of the Lord, with austerity, fasting, &c., are greater than all the sensual pleasures the world could produce for years in the tents of sinners.

Secondly—These worldlings object, that mortification ruins the health, and tends to shorten our lives. I answer, *first*, that it is rare, very rare, that any one ever died through the means

of mortification ; *secondly*, that mortification, instead of shortening life, generally prolongs it ; *thirdly*, that numberless saints lived longer, amidst all the austerities of penance, than worldlings amidst all the gratification of their senses and appetites ; *fourthly*, that God, by a particular and special providence, strengthens both the body and soul of him, whom he sees determined to continue his mortifications as long as life lasts.

Lastly—This effeminate race of worldlings object, that God did not call them to this mortified kind of life. I answer them, and ask in my turn, what do they mean by a call to this kind of life ? Do they expect an embassy from Heaven, to notify the will of God to them ? Do they expect an angel from Heaven will tell them, that they should submit to this salutary law ? Do they not know, from the Gospel, that all Christians are called to mortification and penance ? They ought to know, and all should know, that the plain words of our Saviour, the justice of God, and their own sins, oblige all mankind to mortification and penance.

And *first*, Our Saviour has peremptorily told us, that unless we do penance, we shall all likewise perish: Here is a general declaration, comprehending every body, laity, clergy, perfect, imperfect, rich and poor. *Secondly*—The justice of God : “There is no medium,” says St. Augustine ; “we must satisfy the divine justice either in this life or in the life to come ; if you have a mind,” says he, “that God should forego his right of punishing you, punish yourself—mortify yourself.” *Lastly*—your sins : let any one reflect a little on the enormity and number of his sins, and he will

and must own, that he ought to punish himself for them, or, in other words, that he is obliged to mortify himself on account of them.

Perhaps it may be proper, before I conclude this conference about mortification, to repeat the same remarks that I made about prayer.—Our perfection essentially consists in the love of God, above all things, and in having our souls united to him, by this tender tie. Mortification is one of the means, necessary to acquire this love ; for, in the same proportion as we sink one side of the scale by mortification, we raise the other, filled with the love of God ; our will and passions, well mortified, cleanse and purify the soul, and prepare it properly for receiving the love of God.

SIX REASONS FOR MORTIFYING OURSELVES.

First—BECAUSE we are Christians. The author of the grace by which we are made Christians, is a God Redeemer ; that is, a God who suffered—a God who was crucified. The original grace which was given to man in his innocent state, proceeded from a God Creator ; that is, from a God infinitely glorious, and infinitely happy. This grace, to have a true relation to its author and source, should be a grace of happiness and glory, and should conduct man through the flowery paths of glory and happiness in this life, to boundless glory and eternal

happiness in another life. But, as the grace which makes us Christians, is derived from a God Redeemer; that is, from a God who died and suffered for our sakes; to have, therefore, a due relation to its author and source, it should conduct us through the crosses and mortifications of this life, to the happiness and glory of the next life. And in reality, how can we flatter ourselves, that a grace which flows to us from a head pierced and crowned with thorns, should permit us to have our heads crowned with flowers and roses. For as St. Bernard says, it is an unnatural thing, it is a monstrous sight to see a delicate soldier following his captain crowned with thorns.

Secondly—The grace of Baptism obliges us to mortification: for Baptism, according to St. Paul, is a representation of the death and burial of Jesus Christ, which binds henceforward to die to ourselves, to our passions, and to all our irregular desires. Hence, according to the apostle, this sacrament of life, is a sacrament of death also; and in some sense may be justly called both our cradle and our grave; for at the same time that it communicates to us a spiritual life, and the grace which makes us Christians, it binds us down to die entirely to all the irregular desires of our corrupt nature and of our sensuality. This obligation is clearly marked out to us by our vows of Baptism; for when we solemnly renounce the devil and all his works, the world and all its pomps, we solemnly bind ourselves down to renounce all inordinate and sensual pleasures, all irregular desires, and all the pomps and vanities of this world.

Thirdly—Because we have sinned. All who have sinned, are bound to use their utmost efforts to satisfy God's justice, and to draw down his mercy on them, by expiating their sins. This satisfaction, and this expiation, can be done no other way than by penance and mortification: for, as Tertullian says, “What is a sinner? He is a man born for penance, a man devoted entirely to penance.” And every one knows that no one can do penance without mortifying himself; for, we must punish and mortify the passions that have plunged us into disorders; we must afflict and restrain our senses, that have so often led us astray; we must chastise our flesh that has so often rebelled against us, by carrying our heart away with it in its rebellion, and has hurried us so often into sin. These are the instructions of St. Paul in his 6th chap. 19. v. to the Romans, where he strongly exhorts us; that, as we have heretofore made our bodies instruments of injustice and impurity, by committing many sins, we would now make them instruments of justice and penance for our sanctification.

Fourthly—We must practice mortification in order to prevent our sinning again; for it is certain that mortification is not only the best remedy to cure our past sins, but is also, the best preservative to prevent our future sins; for we have all as children of Adam, received from our nature, wounded by original sin, a strong repugnance to good, and a violent inclination to evil. Now, we can never yield to this strong repugnance to good, which we naturally have, nor gratify this violent inclination to evil, which we likewise naturally have, without falling into sin and into dis-

order. Neither can we resist either, without constantly combatting our passions, and without offering continual violence to our natural inclinations. This resistance, and this combat, constitute the two great and principal practices of mortification. We are all naturally proud, ambitious, passionate, vindictive, selfish, sensual and lazy. These, at our birth, we inherit from our nature, corrupted by sin. Now, if we have a mind to be truly Christians, if we are seriously disposed to work out our salvation, we must constantly endeavour to conquer our pride, our ambition, our passions, our resentments, our selfishness, sensuality and sloth. It is obvious, that we can never succeed in this undertaking, without a continual vigilance over ourselves, without a constant conflict against ourselves, and consequently, without a constant mortification of ourselves.

Fifthly—Because we have difficult and painful duties to fulfil. Every one is obliged, under pain of damnation, to discharge the duties of his state, and to comply with the obligations annexed to his condition in life; now it is impossible for an unmortified person to discharge, faithfully, these duties and obligations. I shall easily prove this truth by some examples:—A married woman is obliged to pay submission to, and have complaisance for her husband, even at those times when he does not seem to merit either, by his improper conduct; she is obliged to watch over the education of her children; she is bound to inspect, to direct, to instruct her domestics; and how can she do all this, without greatly restraining her natural dispositions, with-

out moderating her attachment to sensual pleasures, and to a life of vanity and ease, without retrenching her useless visits—in short, without a constant practice of mortification? In like manner, a husband must bear with his wife's weakness, condescend sometimes to her wayward and capricious humours, provide for the education of his children, and their establishment in life, and give them constantly good example; and can he ever accomplish all this, without care, attention, and vigilance—without moderating his expenses, without regulating his amusements, without retrenching his pleasures? Will he be ever capable of doing all these, without constantly mortifying his natural inclinations? Never, most certainly. In fine, there is no one, from the highest to the lowest condition in life, can ever discharge the duties annexed to his state, without being frequently obliged to sacrifice his time, ease, satisfactions, pleasure, and sometimes, even his health, to the wills, the humour, or the good of others; and no one can make this sacrifice, properly, or meritoriously, without acquiring a habit of constant mortification. For if we all comply with every suggestion of our wills and humours—if we are too fond of our ease—if we gratify our natural inclinations for pleasure, we will seldom comply with the duties of our state, or even with the common duties of every Christian.

Fifthly—Because we have great and constant dangers to avoid, and powerful and formidable enemies to encounter. Every step we take in our life, we take it through the midst of snares, and on the brink of precipices. We can never

avoid these dangerous snares, nor can we secure ourselves from these precipices, without extraordinary care, precaution, and vigilance, and these we cannot have, without a constant practice of mortification. *Secondly*, we have dreadful enemies to encounter: we have the world, which we esteem too much: we have the flesh, which we love too much: and we have the devil whom we fear too little.—Do not such enemies as these oblige us to a constant warfare, except we have a mind to be conquered by them and to perish for ever? Will they permit us to lead an easy, indolent, and sensual life? On the contrary, will they not oblige us to live in constant fear of them, in constant watchfulness against them, and in constant resistance to them? And all these we can never do without constant mortification.

ON PERSEVERANCE.

IT is not uncommon to see sincere conversions in the world; it is not uncommon to see great sinners emerge from a great sea of corruption, and walk steadily on, in the ways of grace: but it is very rare to see many of these persevere in virtue to the end. Any one, therefore, whom the Lord has converted, and who sincerely wishes to persevere in grace, let him carefully attend to the following truths, let him impress them strongly on his mind, and let him adhere to them in his conduct: and such a person, with God's grace, will persevere to the end.

First—Let him cautiously shun all immediate occasions of sin, whether these occasions be absolute or relative.

Secondly—Let him be strictly on his guard against the remote occasions of sin. Without these two precautions the most just man cannot rationally hope for the gift of perseverance.

Thirdly—Strenuously endeavour to avoid the smallest deliberate sin.

Fourthly—Discharge with exactness every duty of your state and condition.

Fifthly—Adhere most faithfully to a good rule of life, prescribed by an enlightened director.

Sixthly—Labour hard to advance in perfection.

Having already spoken on the necessity mankind is under of avoiding the immediate occasions of sin, I think it unnecessary to repeat again here what I lately said on that subject.

Secondly—Let him be strictly on his guard against remote occasions of sin. If we were obliged to avoid the remote, as we are the immediate occasions of sin, we should, as the Apostle says, quit the world, avoid all society, and all connexion with mankind; for the very practice of the Christian virtues, the very discharging of our most indispensable duties, may prove remote occasions of sin to us. Hence, neither reason nor religion bind us to quit any employment, any charge, any function, or any business in life, which may be a remote occasion of sin to us. But reason, religion, and a regard for our salvation, require of us that, in these remote occasions, we should walk with great circumspection, with great diffidence of ourselves, and with a constant watchfulness; they require of us that we should not expose ourselves to

these occasions, that we know to be remote, without some motive of charity, obedience, or necessity. For few truths of the Christian religion, are more clearly established in scripture, than that God abandons to their own weakness all those who are not strictly on their guard, when exposed to the remote occasions of sin.

Thirdly—Let him endeavour to avoid the smallest deliberate sin. It is a maxim of the Holy Ghost, that he who makes light of small faults, will, by degrees, entirely fall off. Few, from a state of virtue, have ever plunged all at once into a state of vice; the experience of mankind, at all times, have clearly proved this truth. Many a step must be taken before a person arrives at the summit of iniquity, for there is a gradation in vice as well as in virtue, and a man must be some time an apprentice in either, before he becomes master; before he becomes a notorious or scandalous sinner, he must be some time a languid and lukewarm Christian; he must make several little attempts, several small essays, before he completes the grand work of iniquity. Making slight of small sins, and committing them frequently, will infallibly bring on this fatal catastrophe in due time; sin becomes familiar to us, we are deprived of the special graces, and of the special protection of Heaven. When in this state our passions are excited, and a violent temptation comes, our hearts, strongly inclined to vice, yield immediately, and without any resistance. David was curious, before he became an adulterer; Solomon was a voluptuary, before he was an idolater; and Judas was covetous, before he betrayed Christ.

Hence, it may be asserted, with great truth, that a man who sincerely wishes to triumph over the devil, with all his artifices—over the world, with all its dangers, and over himself, with all his passions, must be alarmed at the smallest fault, and tremble at the slightest appearance of sin; for, not only these small faults infallibly lead to, and terminate in great crimes, but it is also very possible that these faults, which appear small to a man's sight, may, in the eyes of God, be enormous sins. The only way to secure ourselves, in a matter so delicate, is, to form to ourselves a conscience, solidly delicate and timorous, and to avoid every thing that has the appearance of sin.

Fourthly—Let him discharge every duty of his station with the most punctual exactness and fidelity. The omission of the smallest duty, prepares the soul in time, for an infringement of the most important precepts. Hence it is that no one can ever carry too far his fidelity, and exactness in discharging every duty he is bound to; for there is never any danger in observing exactly every particle of the law, as Scripture says, but there is every danger to fear for a man who deviates, habitually, from this scrupulous exactness. In the eyes and in the language of worldly people, I know that it is called, and looked on, as a ridiculous nicety, or scrupulous exactness, to be attentive to every small matter we do, to keep interior recollection, to be careful what we say, to be regular in our actions, and to be punctual in discharging all the duties of our rule and station. But I likewise know, that in the language of Scripture, and of the Holy Ghost, it is true, genuine, and solid wisdom; because, on these

things greatly depend our persevering in grace, and not relapsing into sin; for, by complying exactly with all the obligations of our rule and station, we must frequently offer violence to our natural inclinations, to our fondness of ease; by these mortifications we are constantly meriting and procuring grace. Though without doing all these things it is possible that we may obtain grace, yet, by doing them exactly, we are morally certain that we will not be deprived of grace—for we place a total reliance on the words of God, in his Gospel, where he declares, that he who is faithful in small things, will be faithful in great matters; and surely, he who is faithful both in great and small things, must persevere to the end.

Is it not sufficient for a Christian to discharge the great duties of christianity, without making himself a slave to such unimportant and trifling matters?

I answer, *first*—That these actions we are speaking of, though trifling and unimportant in appearance, are still, when animated with a good and pure motive, more acceptable to God than the most pompous and most magnificent actions that draw after them the admiration of mankind; for, undoubtedly, more courage, more strength, and more virtue, are required to support constantly and invariably a common life of plainness, simplicity, and exact regularity, than to perform, now and then, some splendid and illustrious actions; for, in great actions, every thing impels—every thing animates us: reason, religion, nature, and honour, all combine together to support us and to push us forward.

The soul, thus supported, concentrates all its forces, makes a vigorous effort, and produces a great and generous action ; but, in an uniform course of life, and in common actions, performed with exactness and in obscurity, we have not these great supports ; on the contrary, we are frequently obliged to act against our natural inclinations, supported only by a grace which we do not feel. Hence it is, that I assert, that an exact, uniform, and virtuous life, spent in the common order of things, has more acceptance with God, than these illustrious actions, which can only happen from time to time ; and that the retired and virtuous life of Judith, spent many years with exactness and regularity, challenges the admiration of a rational Christian more, than her splendid triumph over Holofernes. For to perform all our duties, and to comply with all the obligations of a rule constantly, uniformly, exactly and regularly, in spite of all the repugnances of our nature, in spite of all the inequalities of disposition, and in spite of all the inconstancy of our tempers, requires more courage and fortitude, and is an enterprise more arduous, than persons unacquainted with them could be easily led to believe.

Secondly—It is a gross error and illusion to imagine that any one will faithfully practice the great virtues and the great duties of Christianity, who will not be faithful in practising the smaller virtues and the smaller duties of religion ; for no one can succeed in constantly practising any kind of virtue, without having acquired a great facility in this practice ; and indeed no one ever did, or ever will, acquire this facility, but by the means of constantly practising the ordinary,

the simple, and the common virtues—by constantly complying with all the little duties of his state, and with all the small obligations of his rule. For, when, where, and how often in life will a man find great occasions of distinguishing himself by heroic actions of virtue?—When will he find such a combination of extraordinary circumstances, as will afford him an opportunity of signalizing himself by splendid actions, or by generous efforts of virtuous excellence? Such occasions rarely present themselves in any one's life. If, therefore, they were necessarily required to constitute a good or a virtuous Christian, how many saints would have languished their whole life-time in a total barrenness of good actions, and how few virtues would they have practised? On the contrary, the lives of many saints were filled with nothing extraordinary; they acquired their sanctity by performing common duties, by faithfully complying with common obligations, and they persevered in this sanctity by the facility they acquired in faithfully and constantly performing these duties.

Lastly—Let him labour incessantly to advance in perfection. It is an incontestible maxim that, in a Christian life, if we wish to preserve our former acquisitions, we must be ever making new acquisitions. There is no stopping or halting in the way to Heaven; we must be always in motion—we must be always advancing or falling back. We always carry about us, and in us, a host of passions, and corrupt inclinations, which are incessantly impelling us to our ruin and destruction. Every day they make new efforts—every day they solicit us to vice—

every day they endeavour to strengthen our attachment to sensible things—every day they endeavour to brace more closely the cords that bind us to earthly objects. It is impossible to resist all these combined attacks without opposing labour to labour, effort to effort, and violence to violence.—Hence, we can never cease combating, we can never cease to have watchfulness, we can never cease advancing with arms in our hands, we can never stop in the road of virtue ; for, if we once stop in the road to Heaven, we will infallibly lose, in a short time, what we have acquired by the continued labours of many years. If we are not daily adding to our stock of virtue and piety, this stock will immediately diminish, and soon vanish away. We have been exact and faithful our whole lives—we must persevere in being so to the end; life is a time of trial, and as long as it lasts our trial will last too. These are Gospel truths ; however, any one converted to God, and once fixed in the state of sanctifying grace, should never be discouraged by being obliged to fight constantly against the devil, against the world, and against his own passions; he should never be discouraged by being bound to advance continually in perfection. To such a person the most difficult part of the work is over ; grace has converted him to God, and that was the grand point—that was the capital difficulty ; all he wants now is to avoid the occasions of sin, to hate sin itself, to watch himself, to practice his rule and the duties of his state—and these are made easy to man in time, both by habit and by grace. It is true, that the road to Heaven is narrow—but to

whom? to those, surely, who do not choose nor wish to walk in it; whereas those, who already walk in it, find it wide enough. The yoke of Christ bears heavy, but on whom? on those only who have just begun to carry it; whereas it is light, sweet, and easy, to those who have carried it for some time with courage. If we practice what St. Paul advised, and what he followed himself, it will greatly help us, and greatly animate us to persevere to the last; that is, to meditate often on the end of our journey—to meditate often on Jesus Christ, our divine model—on the examples he has given us—on the helps he affords us—on the promises he has made us—on what he has done for us already—on what he does for us still, and on what he will do for us hereafter. These never fail to help mankind on to Heaven, and to procure an eternal crown of glory for them.



APPENDIX.

PRAYERS FOR CONFESSION.

I will throw myself at the feet of thy consecrated priest, and acknowledge in contrition and sorrow, before thee O omniscient God ! and thy holy representative, that I am a sinful creature unworthy of thy grace and favour. O sublime function ! O salutary institution ! the holy sacrament of penance, in which the priest, in the name of the most holy Trinity forgives the sinner his iniquities, when in his heart he sincerely repents of them, and feels an interior sorrow of mind for his sins ; when he confesses them in humility of heart and all possible sincerity, and is determined to do real penance for them, and to amend his life in future. This mystery of grace and salvation instituted by thee, O Jesus ! is to me a pledge of thy tender love to us, thy brethren. Thou the eternal Word of the Father didst institute this holy sacrament of penance after thy glorious resurrection, when thou didst appear in the midst of thy beloved apostles, to remove all doubt from their minds, which prevented them from understanding the divine economy of our redemption. Then didst thou, with divine meekness and authority given thee by thy heavenly Father, speak the ever memorable words to the holy company of thy apostles : *receive ye the Holy Ghost : whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them : and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.*—(St. John xxx. 23.) And this power, given to

thy apostles, is still in the bosom of thy Holy Apostolic Church, and will never be lost ! O blessed faith ! God has said it, and his word is true for ever. The priest can and will absolve me from my sins in the name of God, if I on my part omit nothing that is requisite for a good confession. And is any thing required which I cannot do ? O no ; only humility, repentance, love, contrition, and a firm determination to amend ; these only are required by thee, O God, as indispensable conditions for a thorough conversion by penance. Where there is humility, where also is the knowledge of our souls. A knowledge which lets me see into the inmost recesses of my heart, where I discover all my sinfulness and earthly-mindedness, and learn all the wretchedness and misery into which my sins and my continuance in sin have brought me. When this knowledge is present to me, then the confession of the multitude and grievousness of my sins comes forth from the affliction of my heart, enlightened by a divine light from on high, which I beseech thee to grant me ; then arises a sadness, an interior, supernatural grief for having by sin offended thee, O God of love ! From the weight of this affliction, arising from the holy love of God, first comes the well ordered, serious and immoveable resolution, to depart from evil, to renounce all sin, and by the sanctifying grace of God to become a better man, and a more pious Christian. In this manner must my interior dispositions be regulated, in order to approach profitably to this sacrament of penance instituted by Christ for the salvation of mankind, and to receive it

worthily and with the happiest effects. If I possess these qualifications, then will all shame, fear, and pride, the only evils I have to apprehend, vanish from my soul; and in their place will come a penitent and candid confession of all my sins. Now I know what a worthy confession is. Yes, dear God! I will conscientiously labour to perform it well, and now proceed to the holy work, confidently invoking the assistance of thy Holy Spirit.

Come Holy Ghost, thou ruler of the hearts of men! enlighten the darkness of my soul! thou who art called the Comforter, come with thy seven-fold gifts, and teach me to see and confess my sinful condition.—That my sins, with all their enormity, may pass before the eyes of my soul: come, O Spirit of Truth! and grant me the light of thy grace for the examination of my conscience.

~~¶~~ *The first part of this examination, entitled "Sins against God," is an examination on the three first commandments of God, and of the church. The second part, entitled "Sins against my Neighbour," is an examination on the seven latter commandments of God. The third part, entitled "Sins against Myself," is an examination on the seven deadly sins, and on the duties of each ones calling and station in life.*

Care must be taken at every sin committed, to examine further the number of times we have been guilty, also the aggravating circumstances attending it; and if it be any sin of scandal, before how many such sins have been committed.

Examination of Conscience.

I.

SINS AGAINST GOD.

Have I neglected my morning and evening prayers, or said them only in part or with wilful distractions?

Have I raised up my heart to God before and after my meals, studies, or the other duties of my calling?

Having received any blessing from God did I return him thanks? or if on the contrary, he sent me any trial, did I murmur?

Have I doubted of any thing which the holy Catholic Church teaches? or, have I dared, through self-conceit, to alter my belief according to my own private opinion, and as it flattered best my natural inclinations? instead of grounding it with humility on the testimony of the Holy Roman Catholic Church of God: a sin too common now-a-days in the world, which would fain appear fine and fashionable.

Have I omitted to hear the word of God through neglect, or from the ungodly idea, that such an one did not preach it with sufficient eloquence?

Have I taken the name of God in vain, or profaned any other sacred name, or any text of the holy scriptures?

Have I been guilty of swearing inconsiderately?

Have I read any book leading to infidelity, or given ear to irreligious discourse, or ridiculed sacred persons, holy things, or pious practices?

Have I neglected to hear a whole Mass on Sundays, and other Holy days of obligation?

Have I profaned those days by any forbidden work, or spent the whole afternoon without performing any religious duty?

Have I at all times assisted at divine service with devotion, and without giving any scandal? Have I duly observed the days of fasting and abstinence?

Have I been guilty of any material omission or negligence, the last time I approached the holy sacraments?

Have I neglected, for any considerable time after falling into sin, to rise again and return to my Heavenly Father by a sincere act of contrition and preparation for Confession?

II.

SINS AGAINST MY NEIGHBOUR.

1st. Towards my Superiors.

2ndly. Towards my Inferiors.

3dly. Towards all others in general.

1st. Towards my Superiors.

Have I been obedient to my parents in all things?

Have I been wanting in love, or respect, for them?

Have I sincerely loved my brothers and sisters, and avoided any ways to offend them? or, if myself offended have I been patient and forgiving?

Have I squandered any part of my parent's substance, or not repaid their cares and expenses through want of application to my learning or business?

Have I shewn to all my other superiors, both temporal and spiritual, due respect, and that for the sake of Christ, whose representatives they are?

Have I been disobedient to them? and have I duly performed the work for which I was hired, or any ways obliged to perform?

Have I borne any ill will against any of my superiors for any reprimand received, or harboured any contempt for them on account of their failings?

2ndly. Towards my Inferiors.

Have I given them any scandal by words or actions?

Have I endeavoured to keep them, as far as I am obliged in the observance of the commandments of God and of his church?

Have I withheld any part of their wages, or oppressed them with excessive work?

Have I in any way ill-treated them?

If blessed with children, have I been careful concerning these five essential points, viz. That they learn their Christian doctrine—that they perform their daily and other devotions—that bad companions, and other occasions of sin, be removed from them—not to indulge them in their passions—nor use wicked words when reprimanding them for their faults?

3dly. Towards all others in general.

IN THOUGHT.

Have I harboured aversion or ill-will against any-one?

Have I been angry against any one, or entertained revengeful thoughts?

Have I judged rashly of any one's actions or intentions?

IN WORD.

Have I been guilty of cursing any person, or thing, or wishing any harm to them?

Have I robbed any one of his peace of mind, or provoked any one by reproaches? or, if provoked myself, have I quarrelled, and thus returned evil with evil?

Have I uncharitably repeated the faults or imperfections of others?

Have I been guilty of the heinous crime of detraction, by speaking of my neighbour what is false or uncertain, or publishing what is secret?

Have I willingly listened to any such detraction?

Have I told lies, and was it to the prejudice of any one or have I sworn to any untruth?

IN DEED.

Have I been guilty of striking any one? or of spiteful signs or behaviour?

Have I cheated any one in buying or selling, or in any bargain or contract?

Have I taken or given away any thing which belonged to another?

Have I in any manner wronged my neighbour in his right and property?

Have I been guilty of any spiritual murder by drawing others into sin?

BY OMISSION.

Have I neglected to make restitution to my neighbour whom I have injured, either in his property or good name?

Have I repaired all the bad example I have given?

Have I avoided all the known immediate dangers or occasions of sin?

Have I hindered, when in my power, detraction, or irreligious and unclean discourse?

Have I neglected or refused to be reconciled to my enemies, or to pray for them?

III.

SINS AGAINST MYSELF.

BY PRIDE.

Have I esteemed myself too much, or taken pleasure in any vain imagination?

Have I spoken in my own praise, or done any thing merely to procure the esteem and praise of others?

Have I compared and preferred myself before others, or despised any one?

Have I squandered money in any extravagance?

BY AVARICE.

Have I harboured any excessive desire or attachment to money? or do I entertain too much anxiety in losing or parting with it?

BY LUST.

Have I been careless in resisting temptation, when taken unawares by an impure representation, or meeting a dangerous object?

Have I exposed myself, or others, to unchastity by immodest dress or behaviour, by indecent pictures, or bad books, by going or staying in dangerous places, or with loose companions?

Have I wilfully taken pleasure in any indecent thought?

Have I taken pleasure in impure desires, and this with relation to what kind of person?

Have I taken pleasure in any shameful irregular motion?

Have I spoken or listened to any indecent or double-meaning words or songs, and was this in the presence of the yet innocent, or person of a different sex?

Have I been guilty of any immodesty by looks, kisses, touches, or other actions?

Have I been guilty of fornication or adultery?

Have I been guilty of any irregularity contrary to the order of nature in the marriage state? or have I sought any such sin, or tempted others to it?

BY GLUTTONY.

Have I been guilty of any excess in eating or drinking?

BY ENVY.

Have I harboured any uneasiness at another's success or praise? or rejoiced at any one's misfortune?

Have I endeavoured to lessen or decry another's merit or good qualities.

BY SLOTH.

Have I neglected to acquire the necessary knowledge, or omitted the performance, of the duties of my particular vocation, and state of life?

Have I performed any of my religious or moral duties

carelessly—or studied too much my own ease—or spent my time idly, or unprofitably?

PRAYER BEFORE CONFESSION.

These are the questions which thou puttest to me, O h^{oly} God! by the truth-telling voice of my conscience. How does the consideration of all these things penetrate my whole soul! O God I acknowledge that I am very far from thy paternal heart; for my sins have estranged me from thee.—Hitherto I have been so infatuated as to find pleasure in sin, where in reality there is none to be found.—Now I can clearly see why in my solitary hours I felt such strange commotions within me—for thou wert not the object of my inmost affection,—this I acknowledge, and that it deeply moves my heart, is already a proof of thy fatherly mercy and goodness. Yes, O Lord, I will make good use of thy grace, I will labour, and earnestly co-operate with thy holy inspirations. My resolutions for the future shall be more animated and effectual, they shall be far more perfect; O my Lord; I will seek thee with all sincerity, and thou wilt reward my search; for I shall find thee, thou wilt open thy fatherly arms to receive me, and embrace thy lost child, found again by repentance. O happy confidence, which thou hast deposited in my heart! My Saviour came to seek that which was lost! I feel in my soul contrition, hearty contrition for all my manifold sins: a contrition which proceeds from the love with which I desire to cleave fast to thee; a contrition for my sins, because I have offended thee, my good God and the best of fathers. But this contrition is not alone in my soul; it is accompanied by the earnest desire and resolution never more to transgress thy holy commandments; the sincere determination to rise up from the sleep of sin, and to begin a new spiritual life by thy holy and sanctifying grace. O God! thy

assistance will not be wanting to me; for I ask it of thee in the name of thy only begotten Son Jesus Christ. No, my Lord! I have spoken no hypocritical words to thee; for what could such language avail me? And now I will finish the work of penance which I have begun, by a holy and sincere confession; I will confess all my sins and imperfections with true humility of heart to thy chosen and appointed priest; I will humbly receive his instructions and exhortations, and follow them with thy holy grace; and by sacramental absolution I humbly hope to receive thy perfect pardon.

PRAYER AFTER CONFESSION.

“Have confidence, my son! thy sins are forgiven thee.” This I humbly hope with confidence, in thee O God! These consolatory words are addressed to me, and I feel a heavenly peace in my soul; for my disburthened conscience enables me to cry out to thee in the emotion of my loving heart: O God! how great, how unbounded is thy mercy; thou hast received me again as thy child. How joyful to me is the consideration that I am again made partaker of thy friendship! O God, may this repose, this inward peace be my portion every day for the time to come; how happy shall I then esteem myself! And now O Lord! accept the offering of all that I am, and let me remain for ever thine. Amen.



